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Sonic Gentitud: Literary Migrations of the Listening Citizen

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Sonic Gentitud: Literary Migrations of the Listening Citizen

by

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Dedication

For my mother, Francisquita Marinita Regina C de Baca, the first storyteller to call me to listen, and for my son, Braden Wilson Mariano French, who models for me what learning to listen truly means.

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most of all, Collin is a fighter; tenaciously, he survived a life-threatening experience that put the Universe into perspective for both of us. Because we know we cannot take for granted the fragility of our lives—all of them—we listen more closely now, to others and to each other.

Sonic Gentitud: Literary Migrations of the Listening Citizen

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Supervisor: Domino Renee Perez

"Sonic Gentitud" brings American Indian and Chicana/o literatures into sound studies as testimonials to decolonial and transformative listening practices. I argue that the narrative forms and paratexts in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* (1977), Sandra Cisneros's *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories* (1991), Sherman Alexie's *Reservation Blues* (1995), and Nina Marie Martínez's *¡Caramba!: A Tale Told in Turns of the Card* (2004) remap the cognitive space of sonic (re)production by offering textual and graphic representations of sound and listening. Understanding this articulation of the literary to the sonic as a form of audile realism, I highlight the listening citizen as a prominent figure in literary renderings of enduring Laguna, Spokane, Chicana/o, and Greater Mexican community-formation and growth. A self-consciously aesthetic narrative depiction that links embodied practices of listening to the historical, material, and political contours and discourses of a specific locale, audile realism represents subversive and differential listening practices that transform social networks of sonic (re)production such that they serve the interests of the tribal nation or Greater Mexican community. Listening citizens are thus critical actors in the maintenance of gentitud, a form of community- and network-building that recognizes affiliation as always-already performed across differences of race, class, gender, and/or sexuality.

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Introduction: Literature of the Listening Citizen

I. Learning to Listen to My Mother Tongue

My mother, Francisquita "Kika" C de Baca, changed her name to Regina one night in an Albuquerque café. She is a great storyteller, a great talker. Sometimes people are drawn to her stories, captivated and encouraged to tell their own without really understanding why. Perhaps that is what happened on that fateful night when she was seventeen. She met a boy and told him she had never seen snow. Both were swept up in a fantasy whirlwind as he whisked her away from her family home, her eleven siblings, her abuelita, her mother, her beloved nieces and nephews, the grave of her father, her home town.

I am sure the boy eventually learned her real name and that she was a native Albuquerquense with relatives in the mountains where he took her to see snow "for the first time." But before that, he took her to meet his mother in Humble (pronounced "umble"), Texas, just outside of Houston. In Regina's presence, the future mother-in-law asked her son, "Why would you want to marry someone like her? We have people like that working in our fields for $2 a day." By "people like that," she meant "Mexican" or, perhaps, "Messkin." Ultimately, it mattered not whether Regina's fiancé knew her given name, knew her family history, or understood that the new name she had given herself signified a sovereign, queenly self-conception; she had been outed, marked by a racial position inextricable from her physical appearance in the cultural logic of Anglo south Texas in the late 1960s.

Though my mother has told me many stories of her life, this one recurs most frequently in my memory and imagination. When she would tell it in my presence, I always strained to listen more closely. I sought some unspoken meaning in the words she

used, the intonations. I listened and looked for the bitterness that came always at the end when she spit out, " . . . in our fields," as though she could no longer stand the words in her memory. And that last bitter phrase, sometimes followed by an extended sigh and a breathy, "So . . . ," always concluded the story, my mother's own silence re-engendering what must have been the stunned silence with which she first heard the words. I always found this ending confusing and compelling at the same time. I continued to listen for her distaste because the bitterness with which she ended this story of her, of our, Mexicanidad starkly contrasted my own sense of it.

My experiences and memories were of the sweet taste of atole, shipped from relatives in Albuquerque, on cold Oklahoma mornings, the comfort of my auntie Gogo's voice when she would say, arms extended pa' un abrazo, "Come here, mi'ja," or the way the words felt in my mouth in elementary school when I would sing my mother's full name to playmates. Francisquita Marinita Rrrrregiña C de Baca Williamson, I would sing out, rolling the "R" on Regina and converting the "n" to "ñ." "Regiña," of course, means nothing, but it sounds so euphonious to a five-year-old ear thoroughly ensconced in the flatness of English. That was our Mexicanidad—sweet, comforting, musical, loving. Not the threatening words I heard my mother repeat when she told this story.

As I listened for that opposition between what I knew of our Mexicanness and what my mother knew and experienced, I began to apprehend her racial memory as one of struggle rather than comfort. I realize now that I have been so drawn to this story, impelled to listen to it repeatedly, compelled to remember it, because this was the only story my mother ever told me in which our ethnic heritage was so explicitly disparaged by a person of privilege, the type of person I was otherwise taught to respect. A model citizen. For better or worse, both listening to that story and listening for the bitterness of

my mother's reiteration of her future ex-mother-in-law's words taught me to listen for other tensions, other contradictions between my experiences and others' stories.

But, most importantly, I learned to listen for the silences and gaps that comprised those contradictions. As I grew older and experienced the same audible bitterness directed at me, my family and friends, or even strangers with whom I felt a connection, I frequently recalled that story and its telling. Specifically, as I grew into a teenager and adult, I recognized the silence and breathy sigh with which it ended, as a representation of the workers in the fields themselves. Neither for the cold mother-in-law nor for my own mother did the workers ever have voices. I wanted to hear and know not just more about the workers but more *from* them. Indeed, the workers became a metonym for those who struggle daily both within and against systemic class-, race-, and gender-based oppression. Hearing this silence as a part of listening to my mother's story formed an intellectual clearing for me to recognize that the silences in one story are pregnant with the voices, lives, secrets, motivations, and power struggles of millions of others.[1]

Or even of just one other. I can only speculate, for example, as to my mother's intentions in telling and re-telling the story that, for me, evidenced the pain of her racial memory, a pain from which she strove to protect her children. One of its effects, however, was to clarify for me the way in which she, a single, Mexican-American mother striving to survive in a white world, enacted what Gloria Anzaldúa terms "la facultad," "a kind of survival tactic that people, caught between the worlds, unknowingly cultivate." La facultad is a form of understanding "the deep structure below the surface" of the phenomena of everyday life, a form of sign-reading that seeks the logic of a social and

[1] In addition to using this understanding as a guide for my research and teaching, I have turned it into activism for workers' rights, immigrants' rights, and Indigenous Peoples' rights in various organizations, including the Workers Defense Project (Austin), Posada Esperanza (Austin), and the Indigenous Cultures Institute (San Marcos), throughout Central Texas.

cultural situation as a means of surviving in a world in which one is identifiably Other (*Borderlands* 61). Rarely did I glimpse my mother's possession of this faculty. As a youth and adolescent, I was often frustrated by what I imagined as a contradiction, namely that she espoused assimilative attitudes and practices despite her explicit and avowed recognition of the unequal power structures against which she had to struggle on a daily basis. Yet as that story recurs in my imagination now, as I re-play the tones of her voice, re-envision the look on her face, I hear beneath the telling itself her own incipient recognition of the story as a lived expression of these seemingly contradictory forces at work in her life and self-conception. I hear beneath the telling the co-presence of multiple strategies for survival. Through the reiterations of this storytelling event, I thus learned to cultivate the practice of listening as a performance of la facultad.

This technique of listening beyond, beneath, and behind the immediacy of sonic presence for the strategic silences that comprise sonic (re)production re-cognizes sound as a representation of the as-yet unheard agents of sonic production. Linking the sonic to the visual, this re-cognition of sound requires a cooperative act of imagination and clairaudience that makes present the vast and mobile spatiality of sonic gentitud.[2] "Gentitud," a pochoism that combines the Spanish word *gente*, or people, with the suffix

[2] The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines clairaudience as: "The faculty of mentally perceiving sounds beyond the range of hearing, alleged to be induced under certain mesmeric conditions." In this definition and by its linguistic associations with clairvoyance, the term connotes a "special" prophetic or extra-sensory perception often maligned in Western thought and culture as superstitious or supernatural. Indexing Western thought's association of the visual with the intellect, on the other hand, the words "imagination" and "intuition" represent a special status of thought that clairvoyance does not encompass, although "imagination" can also be defined as a faculty of mentally perceiving visions beyond the range of sight. By linking clairaudience to imagination, I seek to emphasize that the mental perception of sounds, like the mental perception of images, works as a quotidian form of intellectual activity. For an alternative definition and discussion of "clairaudience," see R. Murray Schafer who, in *The Soundscape* (1977), defines it as "clean hearing" in an age of industrial noise pollution (11). For extended discussions of the alignment of visual terminology and metaphors with the objectivity of the intellect in the Western intellectual tradition, see Don Ihde, *Listening and Voice: A Phenomenology of Sound* (1976) and Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (2003), which I gloss below.

–tud to indicate an abstract and dynamic state of being, implies a network of political and historical agents invested in the creative maintenance and endurance of the collective, whether defined as a tribe, a nation, a People, a Pueblo, or a Raza. In other words, gentitud describes what Chicana feminist intellectual historian Chela Sandoval calls a "coalitional consciousness," a form of community- and network-building that recognizes affiliation as always-already enacted and performed across differences of race, class, gender, and/or sexuality (*Methodology* 4). Gentitud emerges in response to the oppressive forces of colonialism and imperialism, social normativity, and racialized, classed, and gendered forms of hierarchization that encode dominative practices of cultural citizenship, but, as with Sandoval's coalitional consciousness, gentitud emerges out of the potential constituted in difference itself rather than as a centralizing, homogenizing, or hegemonic force. As both a state of being (in) a community and as a process through which affiliative bonds are continually assessed and strengthened, then, gentitud depends as much on critical dissent from within the community as on assent and agreement. For this reason, understanding the sounds of gentitud depends upon the cultivation of a performance of listening, understood as a socially and culturally learned activity rather than passive reception, defined by decolonial tactics of resistance, subversion, and transformation. Sonic gentitud implies listening as an enactment of la facultad or what Sandoval calls "differential consciousness," an embodied technique that hears the "deep structures" of sound as cognitive (re)mappings of social and political space.

II. Sound Studies and Oppositional Literary Realism

My experiences of reading the fiction under consideration here have been similar to my experiences of listening to my mother's story. In combination with the narratives' speakerliness, references to extant musical traditions in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*

(1977), Sandra Cisneros's *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories* (1991), Sherman Alexie's *Reservation Blues* (1995), and Nina Marie Martínez's *¡Caramba!: A Tale Told in Turns of the Card* (2004) tended to heighten the impact of the silence of the text and its accompanying music.[3] I understood implicitly that in that silence, there were stories and voices competing with or complementing the narrative proper. That silence impelled me to listen.

Engaging the strategies for listening presented in each work and critically assessing my own listening practice became a central concern of this project. The stakes of listening behind and beyond the music to the broader collective acts of sonic (re)production depicted in the narratives emerged in the contributions of historical and political actors to histories and stories of decolonization, contributions frequently silenced by a Foucauldian reiteration of "things said" in and about historical discourse in the Americas. Indeed, Silko, Cisneros, Alexie, and Martínez recognize technologies of listening as viable strategies of political transformation and resistance. And yet the question of how remains. How can Native and Chicana/o authors and activists utilize technologies of sound and listening, particularly to recorded popular musics, without succumbing to either an assimilationist paradigm that rests upon integration into late capitalist modes of production and consumption or an essentialist paradigm that pits orality/aurality and listening as more authentic modes of reception than reading or writing? These questions emerge time and again in American Indian literary scholarship as well as Mexican American folklore and cultural studies as a question of the

[3] Henry Louis Gates, Jr. coined the term "speakerly text" in his seminal study *The Signifying Monkey* (1988) to characterize the "peculiar play of 'voices' at work in the use of 'free indirect discourse' in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*" (xxv). More generally, and as I use the term, "speakerliness" or the "speakerly text" re-presents speech communities through the self-conscious application of literary techniques such as free indirect discourse (*Woman Hollering Creek*), narrative intervention (*Caramba*), or the incorporation of "oral" poetic forms into a prose narrative (*Ceremony* and *Reservation Blues*).

relationships between orality and writing. In response, I argue in this dissertation that these American Indian and Chicana/o narratives offer, first, a theoretical construction of listening and sound as yet unidentified in sound studies or philosophy and, second, that they deploy that theoretical construct in the service of mapping the migrations of multiple decolonial practices, a kind of cognitive mapping in which the literary unites with the sonic.

In the four chapters that follow, I approach *Ceremony*, *Woman Hollering Creek*, *Reservation Blues*, and *Caramba* from the intersection of literary and sound studies, analyzing the works as literary depictions of listening that locate performances and politics of listening within the very specific contexts of tribal nations and ethnic Mexican communities on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. Because sound travels across and transforms both geopolitical and cognitive space, forming what Josh Kun terms "audiotopias," listening is critical to the cultural survival of those who negotiate the sonic shapes and movements of modern forms of belonging.[4] By documenting in narrative fiction listening practices as forms of resistance and transformation, Silko, Cisneros, Alexie, and Martínez re-imagine the affective and affiliative bonds that structure both listening and citizenship.[5]

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[4] Although, for Kun, "audiotopias" are defined by the ways in which "music functions like a possible utopia for the listener," his definition is based on a conception of the individual listener seeking escape in the privacy of headphones or the intimacy of a listening booth or bedroom (3). The authors in this study, however, highlight the sociality and political utility of listening by positioning listening subjects in spaces shared with others and, crucially, by depicting sound itself as heard—differentially—as a form comprised by the historical, sociocultural, and political work of others.

[5] The terms "citizen" and "citizenship," as I use them throughout this dissertation, encompass the conventional definitions of a member of a nation, state, or legally recognized tribal nation as well as a broader conception that recognizes all subjects touched, affected, or effected by discourses of citizenship, whether inclusive or exclusive. I thus use these terms in much the same way that Chela Sandoval uses the term "citizen-subject" throughout *Methodology of the Oppressed*, namely, as one always-already subject to as well as a subject of the legal, historical, and cultural discourses of citizenship.

While these four works of fiction are certainly not the first to incorporate pop music or even listening into a narrative structure, they nevertheless represent a politics of sound and listening in which sonic (re)production is inextricable from either local or transnational social and political economies. As such, they simultaneously create and depict forms of literary and audile realism grounded historically and materially in Laguna, Mexican, Spokane, and Chicana/o experiences respectively. A precursor to the combinations of literary and audile realism, albeit without the pop music intertext, can be seen in Tomás Rivera's 1971 novella . . . *y no se lo tragó la tierra*. *Tierra* dramatizes a form of listening that accounts for a community's recognition of its members as ineluctably linked to the social and economic fabric of a nation *as* bodies in exchange, that is, as commodities. The novella is framed by the experiences of a young, unnamed Tejano, a migrant laborer who, at the beginning of a "lost year" hears himself being called but who, upon turning in response, "realize[s] that he had called himself. And thus the lost year began" (83). The unnamed narrator's turn in response to his clairaudient hearing of someone or something calling his name initiates a process of subjectification that, for the remainder of the novella, is not comprised of a continued listening to inner processes of self-development. Instead, it is populated by the voices of others in the community, voices that echo and resound most clearly in the vignette entitled "Cuando lleguemos" / "When We Arrive."

"Cuando lleguemos" is one of the last pieces in the novella, appearing almost immediately before the return to the concluding narrative frame, in which the young boy is "Under the House," hearing once again the continuations and conclusions of the stories that have occurred over the course of the novella/the lost year. As such, the voices in "Cuando lleguemos," voices of children, men, and women standing in a broken-down truck on their way from Texas to Minnesota on the seasonal migrant laborer circuit,

prefigure the last voices that lead to the young man's return out into the world. Indeed, the form of clairaudience through which the young narrator "hears" these voices and apprehends their impact on his own emergent political consciousness informs what Ramón Saldívar describes as the novel's Chicano "realism." According to Saldívar, through formal innovation and attention to these characters' voices, Rivera actively manipulates the ideological conventions of American literary realism by explicitly linking his characters to "the stuff of South Texas social and economic history, lived out as the community of *la raza*." Indeed, "[i]n their very alienation and their sense of themselves as commodities to be sold, Rivera's characters come to apprehend reality as a process," a recognition that engenders the unnamed narrator's own re-cognition of the community, the collective embodied in the clairaudience of "Cuando lleguemos," as "an element in the larger ideological struggle between agricultural capital and social democracy" (90). Rivera's, then, is a realism in which ideology emerges in and through the text's forms and structures rather than being masked by them. Moreover, it is a realism developed through attention to the young narrator's emergent audile technique, his development of an ear for sonic gentitud.

The narrator's performance of listening as collective clairaudience informs *Tierra*'s potential to imagine a political subject of resistance to the very economic and social conditions that provide the basis for Rivera's realism. Despite the integral part that listening and clairaudience play in *Tierra*, however, the novella in general would not conventionally make it a suitable subject for the intersection of literary and sound studies, since the text itself remains silent, the "voice" merely a function of narrative technique. When sound studies meets literary studies, it is conventionally in scholarship that examines either the relationships between orality and writing or relationships between

popular music and literature.[6] The full impact of narrative literature for sound studies, as evinced in *y no se lo tragó*, has not yet been credited in part because literary depictions of listening are so variable that they resist easy classification into the terms of empirical-phenomenological or dominant-cultural scholarship that proliferates in the field. On the other hand, sound studies itself has been difficult to define and locate on disciplinary maps, a fact that has led to much recursivity within the field. Two examples, that of Don Ihde's *Listening and Voice: A Phenomenology of Sound* (1976) and Jonathan Sterne's *The Audible Past: The Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (2005) will serve to clarify the bases for these challenges.

But before exploring the ideological contours of these representative examples, I should clarify the position from which I read and analyze these sound studies texts. I am

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[6] Though certainly not exhaustive, the following are literary critical examinations of popular music in ethnic American fiction. Houston Baker, Jr.'s *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature* (1984) reads African American narrative prose as embedded in a "blues matrix," "the multiplex, enabling *script* in which Afro-American cultural discourse is inscribed" (4). Baker's work excavates the discourses of African American life and experience as they manifest in the blues as well as slave narratives and nineteenth- and twentieth-century novel traditions. Saldívar's *Chicano Narrative: The Dialectics of Difference* (1990) takes the corrido form as his point of departure for exploring the oppositional dialectics of Chicana/o narrative. Continuing this trend, José E. Limón's *Mexican Ballads, Chicano Poems: History and Influence in Mexican American Social Poetry* (1992) reads the corrido tradition generally, and specifically Américo Paredes's contributions to an understanding of the corrido in Mexican American life and cultural expression, as a "master poem" for Movimiento-era Chicano poets. Alexander Weheliye's *Phonographies: Grooves in Sonic Afro-Modernity* (2005) moves from the text-based examination of musical traditions that prevail in the previous works to explore the ways in which African diasporic authors, filmmakers, and musicians use sound reproduction technologies to signify Black modernity and Black modern subject-formation. Finally, Josh Kun's *Audiotopias: Music, Race, and America* (2005) uses song as an entrée into the transnational flows of music and literature in and across North American in order to highlight, on one hand, the limited "script" of state-national citizenship and, on the other, the ways in which authors such as Langston Hughes and musicians such as Los Tigres del Norte have refused to remain within the bounds of that "script" (9). Though he treats roc en español as exemplary of the struggle of Mexican musics against the Mexican state, he reads neither Chicana/o nor Mexican literature that include these musical forms.

Particularly in American Indian literary criticism, the scholarship that deals with orality and writing is vast; however, none really approximates the questions of listening and sound in ways that might be considered a literary intervention into sound studies or vice versa. Nevertheless, Muskogee Creek scholar Craig Womack's *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism* (1999) and Abenaki scholar Lisa Brooks's *The Common Pot: The Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast* (2008) provide exemplary guides for understanding tribally and communally specific relationships between oral/aural traditions and writing.

approaching Ihde's phenomenology and Sterne's cultural materialist history from the vantage point of U.S. "third world feminists" and women of color among whom dominative hearing and listening practices have been experienced as ineluctable mis-hearings or non-hearings. Gloria Anzaldúa's essay "Speaking in Tongues: A Letter to Third World Women Writers," for instance, calls attention to the interpenetration of social invisibility and inaudibility for women of color writers. Writing about the dangers of writing from a position of silence and invisibility, Anzaldúa recognizes that "our speech, too, is inaudible. We [are received as though we] speak in tongues like the outcast and the insane" (165). Invoking social actors—the outcast and insane—against which normative political economies, behaviors, and voices are defined, Anzaldúa highlights the processes through which people implicitly "close their ears" to the voices of women of color, voices frequently cast as unmeaning noise.[7] Similar to Anzaldúa in this passage, Carole Boyce Davies reverses the terms of Gayatri Spivak's seminal question about the capacity for subaltern speech in order to address the even more vital question of whether subaltern speech can get a hearing. "[I]t is not only the condition of silence and voicelessness that seems the most pressing at this historical moment," Boyce Davies argues, "but the function of *hearing* or *listening* on the part of those who wield oppressive power." Calling for an "appropriate critique of the inability of the oppressors to HEAR," she encourages her readers to attend to the ways in which hearing and listening are articulated to social structures of power that determine *who* does and does not get a hearing and by whom, *how* that hearing is obtained and made meaningful, and *why*. "Just as in the transformation of silence into language and action, in Audre Lorde's

[7] Anzaldúa's clarity of audition and her insight on this point evidences the fact that, had my mother said something in response to her mother-in-law's racist comments, it probably would not have been heard as a meaningful response. Kika's decision to select her own audience, her children, for the re-telling further evidences the desired listening practice—one of sympathy—implicit in the storytelling event.

words, there also has to be a transformation which links hearing with action," she argues ("Hearing" 3). For the purposes of this study, that transformation emerges from the politics of listening as a differential and oppositional practice, a politics and practice that remains undefined in the explorations of sound and listening that follow.

In a 2005 *American Quarterly* review entitled, "Is There a Field Called Sound Culture Studies? And Does It Matter?" Michele Hilmes identifies the perpetually "emergent" state of sound studies, writing in reference to her title, "I pose the two questions above in the face of mounting evidence that the study of sound, hailed as an 'emerging field' for the last hundred years, exhibits a strong tendency to remain that way, always emerging, never emerged" (249).[8] Indeed, it appears that sound studies scholars feel the need to reiterate sound's significance as a subject of intellectual pursuit in order to undo centuries of intellectual history that privilege vision as the sensory site/sight of the work of the mind. Sound and listening, although ubiquitous in everyday experience and frequently romanticized, have emerged in histories of Western thought as forms more suitable to the realms of the primitive, the purely aesthetic, or the emotional, sentimental, and irrational, associations that sound studies seeks to denaturalize.

As Don Ihde points out in his *Listening and Voice: A Phenomenology of Sound*, the primacy of the visual is so embedded in a Western conception of rationality that it becomes inescapable even in everyday language usage much less in the idioms of Western philosophy. "This visualism," he contends, "may be taken as a symptomatology of the history of thought. The use and often metaphorical development of vision becomes a variable which can be traced through various periods and high points of intellectual history to show how thinking under the influence of this variable takes shape" (6). He

[8] Six years after the publication of Hilmes's review, faculty in my department still encourage me to use the phrase "emergent field of sound studies" when I discuss my research.

goes on to trace that history, beginning with the pre-Socratic Greeks, for whom, "[e]ven the Greek verb meaning 'to live' is synonymous with 'to behold light'" (7), and documenting the pervasiveness of the visual in words like "imagination" and "intuition," "from the Latin *in-tueri*, 'to look at something'" (8). Despite Ihde's clear decentering and deconstruction of vision's primacy to thought, almost thirty years later historian Jonathan Sterne counterposes the "transhistoricity" of the phenomenological method by deconstructing what he calls the "audio-visual litany," a set of discursive and intellectual commonplaces that continue to position sound and audition in opposition, and frequently inferior, to vision.[9] Sterne's work, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction*, which broke ground in sound studies by "redefine[ing] it less as the study of sound itself, or as practices of aurality within a particular industry or field, than of the cultural contexts out of which sound media emerged and which they in turn work to create," deconstructs the bases for the audio-visual litany by emphasizing that sound and listening are as much products of social and cultural learning as are writing and literacy, a point foundational to my study (Hilmes 249).

Perhaps because of their need at once to de-emphasize vision's intellectual primacy and to de-romanticize aurality, these two texts exemplify the extent to which much of sound studies universalizes and homogenizes cultures of sound to what Hilmes calls in the singular "*sound culture*" (249). The consequence is a normativization of listening and sound according to the dominant models that surface in each work. For

[9] The audio-visual litany is an auspicious beginning-point for any history of the senses, according to Sterne, because it "idealizes hearing (and, by extension, speech) as manifesting a kind of pure interiority. It alternately denigrates and elevates vision: as a fallen sense, vision takes us out of the world. But it also bathes us in the clear light of reason (15). Among the binary oppositions that Sterne lists among the litany, the following are interrogated in Ihde's phenomenology: "hearing is concerned with interiors, vision is concerned with surfaces"; hearing tends toward subjectivity, vision tends toward objectivity";"hearing is about affect, vision is about intellect"; "hearing is a primarily temporal sense, visions is a primarily spatial sense" (Sterne 15).

Ihde, that model is of a perceptual center, fringe, and horizon that describes a "focal field" in which the "center" becomes the locus of the clearest sonic perception. For Sterne, the form of audile technique that comes to represent the cultural "teachings" of the sound industry embodies a history of listening for sonic "fidelity," which he recognizes as a fiction; nevertheless, while denaturalizing the idea of aural or audio fidelity, Sterne adheres to the faithfulness of the images and practices through which listening for fidelity is learned. He thus constructs an audile fidelity that is then presumed universal or, at the very least, normative in the realm of sound culture.

For Ihde, who approaches sound, voice, and listening from a phenomenological perspective, the listening and speaking subject is always-already present to himself (tellingly, Ihde always uses the masculine pronoun) and can thus access experience as a fully integrated, perceptive being.[10] On the margins or, to use Ihde's terminology, the horizons of subjective experience, the subject himself becomes less and less determinate, but those horizons are constantly shifting as the subject moves through the world and thereby shifts peripheral objects to the center. From the center, Ihde suggests, both sight and hearing obtain the clearest, most transparent, and therefore most meaningful sensory information. As perception moves outward to the fringes, to the horizons of invisibility and silence respectively, meaning becomes less and less intelligible to each sense.

Ihde recognizes the interprenetration for both vision and hearing of the imagination, on one hand, and clairaudience, or what he terms "inner speech," on the other hand. As the imaginative, or purely mental, mode of perceiving sensory data in either form begins to encroach on external or "objective" data, perception approaches the horizons of invisibility and silence. With regard to voice and listening, for example, Ihde

[10] Gayatri Spivak describes this phenomenological presence to self, as evinced specifically in Edmund Husserl's conception of a subject's inner voice, as a central site of critique for Derrida in "Translator's Preface" to *Of Grammatology* (lii-liv).

offers the following by way of demonstration: "In genuine listening to another in conversation," he writes, "I must let him speak, I must resist both speaking and allowing my own inner speech to intrude." Not to do so would create a situation in which the other's "speech recedes [such] that I have to reconstruct it from the fringes of the auditory dimension" (161). For Ihde's phenomenology of listening and voice, then, audible speech is transparent when it is linguistically central (that is, comprehensible to the interlocutor) as well as in the center of the field of sonic perception. "And yet," he continues,

> were the other to be speaking, and suddenly the sound actually disappear, I should no longer be able to hear what was being said. The "transparency" of his speaking would not merely be diminished [pushed to the outer dimensions of the auditory field] but disappear as explicit. What was being said in the sound retreats and becomes opaque, but significance does not disappear entirely. It is transformed to the vague and implicit significance which I can *see*. In watching the silent spectacle of his speech I see that "something" is being said. (162)

For Ihde's archetypal listener, when either clairaudience or other disruptive external sonic production intrudes into the "center" of auditory perception, it renders that center increasingly opaque, that is, noisy or meaningless. In order to make the sonic experience meaningful, then, the listener does not move to the horizons of experience to clarify the noisiness of the center; rather, he attempts to push the distractions further to the margins. He needs the distracting sounds to approximate the horizon of sonic experience, which is, in Ihde's formulation, silence.

Ihde's approach to the phenomenological experience of sound assumes an equivalence between "interlocutors" such that the only variables to mutual understanding and intelligibility are the degrees of the "polyphony of experience" created by the co-presence of clairaudience and externally audible sound. He fails, in other words, to account for the varieties of social, cultural, and ideological difference, as well as the

power differentials implied therein, that tend to push certain voices—such as the distracting or noisy voices of the outcast and the insane—to the "fringes" of meaningful sound.

On the other hand, in the passage above, the horizon of silence is rendered meaningful by its visual complement. According to the situation that Ihde sets up, though aurally distracted the listener still understands that "'something' is being said" because he can see the "silent spectacle of speech." Extending Ihde's premises by way of analogy to the experiential world of raced, classed, gendered, and sexed differences, we may imagine indeed that the unmeaning "silence" or "noise" of an Other can be made meaningful within the visual logics encoded in embodiment. Thus, the visual logics of race, class, gender, and sexuality already overdetermine the sonic (re)production of subaltern Others.

The veil of opacity that occurs when one allows an inner dialogue or inner speech to overtake control of audition serves as a further analogy to the ways in which power differentials affect one's *listening* to the raced, classed, gendered, or sexed Other. To listen, for instance, only from the center implies a manifest listening practice that derives ideological meaning as encoded literally. It assumes knowledge, including knowledge of racialized, gendered, classed, and sexed Others, as given, and it frames representation as realist or naturalist. The clairaudient voices of the centered listener are not presumed to be "veils" that hinder auditory perception, but rather phonic enhancers that render the sounds of the Other more faithfully meaningful because familiar and expected. To listen from the fringes, the horizons of silence and invisibility, on the other hand, cannot presume such one-to-one correlations. Instead, the experience of listening from the fringes is to hear at one and the same time the differences between the sounds of the center and the experiential sounds that approach the horizon of silence. Listening from

the fringes, like the clairaudient practice of the young narrator in *Tierra*, is thus always-already plural and differential. Instead of sublating the "polyphony of experience" into a single, centered, coherent meaning, listening from the horizons of silence and invisibility re-cognizes that polyphony as a guide or map to its embodiment in historical, political, and socio-cultural agents as well as to an enactment of response-ability for collective survival.

Although Jonathan Sterne deconstructs some of Ihde's premises in the former's critique of the audio-visual litany and specifically calls out the fictiveness of audio "transparency," albeit in a cultural media framework rather than from a cognitive or phenomenological bent, *The Audible Past* retains a faith in the cultural unity and coherence of sonic experience in the age of technological sonic (re)production. For Sterne, the social and cultural forms of audile technique, or embodied techniques of listening, that emerged in response to such technologies as mediate auscultation in medicine (which ultimately resulted in the stethoscope), telegraphy in communications, or phonography in entertainment, can be traced in the manuals and advertisements that demonstrated how to use these emergent technologies. These manuals and advertisements indicate Sterne's fundamental premise: that listening is an embodied technique learned through forms of socialization that include media networks and the ideological underpinnings thereof.

Yet for all of his much-needed interventions into the technicality of listening and the ways in which it is a socially learned practice, Sterne nevertheless universalizes listening for fidelity or audio realism as *the* way in which people listen, particularly to sonic (re)production, in the West. Ironically, Sterne indicates his own faith in the power of sound technology producers' ads and, indeed, in the power of a certain kind of

education by advertisements in his own deconstruction of the very concept of sonic "faithfulness." He writes, for instance,

> One of the most common moves in twentieth-century American advertising is to "educate" readers in order to persuade them that the product being hawked is superior. This has been widely noted in ads for soap and other hygiene products. The same kind of logic was at work in advertisements for reproduction equipment—teaching readers to *listen* for fidelity (or at least a particular dimension of sound called *fidelity*) was the expressed goal. (280).

Sterne explains that the very expression of that goal belies the ideological underpinnings of audio fidelity. That is, an understanding of sound fidelity relied upon an already-circulating conception of a faithful relationship of copy to "original." As Sterne's deconstructive logic demonstrates, however, the idea of "original," "authentic," or "live" sound emerged from the very possibility of a media network that implied reproduction and copies. The aim of his deconstruction is to reverse the discourse of audio fidelity and realism, which "takes sound reproduction out of the social world and places it in the world of magic," in order to emphasize its imbrication in media networks comprised of social beings, their ideologies, their material technologies, and their embodied practices of sounding and listening (284).

However, in "returning" the discourse of listening for audio fidelity to its social base, Sterne appears to assume a one-to-one correlation between the ads' teachings and actual listening practices.[11] Because of his focus on unearthing the producers' ideological and material foundations, he privileges a technique of listening that accords with those

[11] This becomes most apparent when, noting the prevalence of white women featured as listeners in ads, Sterne claims, "These images of women participating in the sound-reproduction network are not metaphoric . . . . Rather, they are literal. The emergent media of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries grew alongside a whole class of women who were full participants in mass culture—and that participation was on an unprecedented scale" (228). By this logic, the relative absence of Black, Native, Mexican-American, or Asian women or men as listeners would suggest that they were not fully participant in the growing mass media networks, a conclusion contested by vast historical evidence particularly of phonograph usage. See, for instance, Weheliye's *Phonographies* (2005) and John Troutman's *Indian Blues* (2009).

featured in the ads, which, incidentally, also accords with an uncritical faith in the logic of the original-copy relation, in media technologies as forms of "vanishing mediation" that will grant access to authentic sound, and in the realism of reproduced sounds rather than their artifice. Sterne's privileging of techniques of listening that accord with or assent to a perfect faith in each of these ideological underpinnings of sound reproduction and fidelity, in fact, leads him to categorize other forms of listening that attend to the scratchiness of phonographs or the white noise of radio transmission as "audile technique wildly out of control." Listeners "tolerating the radio's noise in search of that tiny snippet of programming" had cultivated, in Sterne's assessment, "too fine a sense of foreground and background [leading them] to discern sonic indices of non-existent distant events" (272). In other words, these pathological listeners who had exceeded the ideological "control" of listening manuals and advertisements, had formed a clairaudient technique by attending to the machine's noise rather than ignoring it in the interest of fidelity. The place of this listener in *The Audible Past* is on the margins of normative listening practices.

Rather than a pathology, as Sterne conceives of this particular technique, listening beyond the confines of the "control" of advertisers and research and development teams can actually be an asset for those who manipulate sonic (re)production technologies as a strategy for survival. Depicting the development of a sense, in this case of hearing-listening, as hyper-development, non-normative, or "wildly out of control" serves the same interests as depicting the voices of racialized, classed, gendered, and sexed Others as "outcast and insane." But the development of an audile technique "out of control," that is, oppositional, resistant, or transformative of the ideologies out of which audio/aural fidelity emerges, serves to clarify the actual bases of control itself. It denaturalizes the very ideological premises on which fidelity is founded.

In spite of his own faith in the pedagogical capacity of sound reproduction marketing, a faith that depends on his presumption of the audience's perception of the ads' realism, Sterne's account actually reveals a radical possibility for sound studies: that images and text can teach practices of listening. If the makers and promoters of sound reproduction technologies can teach certain listening skills and techniques, why could not listeners themselves also teach audile technique? Moreover, if advertisements can combine aesthetic with ideological practices to imagine a practice of listening for fidelity, why could not literature combine its didactic with its aesthetic function to imagine and enact a form of differential audile realism? Indeed, the literature under consideration in "Sonic Gentitud" performs precisely this oppositional task. The literary depictions of listening in *Ceremony*, *Woman Hollering Creek*, *Reservation Blues*, and *Caramba* begin not with a faith in the machines of sonic reproduction as "vanishing mediators," but rather with their material presence. The literature of audile realism draws strict attention to the medium, which in turn calls attention to the continual re-enactment of their social functions, their playback, and their materiality. This attention to the sociality of sound reproduction does not presume, with Sterne, that listeners were "convinced of this equivalence" between "live" and "reproduced" sonic events (*Audible Past* 285). Instead, audile realism seeks to demonstrate the ways in which subaltern, marginalized, and/or colonized listeners have enacted strategies of listening beyond sonic meanings as "faithful" representations in order to decolonize the very bases for "fidelity," "authenticity," and "representation."

III. Sonographic Mapping and the Politics of Listening

As opposed to phonography, or "sound-writing," sonography uses the physical properties of sound to create a visual representation of an object invisible to the naked

eye. Whereas the phonograph relies upon an invisible graphic operation in order to make sound, sonography relies upon an inaudible sonic operation in order to make images. Metaphorically, then, sonography is thus taken to an extreme in these texts in which the sounds of recorded popular music are rendered silent as text in order to map, or spatially and cognitively represent, the social, cultural, and discursive contours of a community. Extending the trope, the author as sonographer wields sound to craft an image of a community from a variety of perspectives and audile positions. In its respective cultivation of an audile literary realism that depicts characters listening strategically to recorded popular music, each text offers a map to practices of cultural citizenship that include listening; these literary mappings in turn index sound as a means of cognitively mapping of gentitud.

Because gentitud embodies a coalitional politics that recognizes and emerges from difference, it cannot compass a model of listening characterized exclusively by assent to the normative teachings of cultural mores or by an impulse to familiarity that serves only to return the listener to an identificatory center. Instead, the differential politics of gentitud requires a strategic practice of listening that depends as much on dissension, contestation, and alienation as it does on familiarity and recognition. Indeed, where familiarity and recognition at once condition and emerge from the shared discourses of aural production and, in turn, the modes of listening appropriate to them, dissension, contestation, and alienation reinforce the sociality of listening by highlighting its discursivity and performativity. As a performance, that is, listening makes present certain norms associated with practices of audition. Sitting quietly may be appropriate as a performance of listening to a lecture or an opera, but the same act may not be appropriate as a performance of listening at a baile or a rock concert. These conventions emerge as the result of what pop music theorist and sociologist Simon Frith refers to as a

"collusion" among listeners that comes from the standards of normativity from within a community but is simultaneously irreducible to them. For Frith, genre development offers one instance of how music participates in collective acts of meaning-making. He writes, for instance, "the genre labeling process is better understood as something collusive [rather] than as something invented individually as the result of a loose *agreement* among musicians and fans, writers and disc jockeys. It is in fanzines, for example, that sounds are most systematically lined up with attitudes (musicians and audiences) and genres most earnestly argued about ideologically (and related to ways of life)" (88). Though Frith emphasizes the agreement aspect of meaning-making, the last statement regarding ideological argument indicates the extent to which collusion relies upon critical dissension. The play of expectation and recognition that conditions how we hear and classify certain sounds, then, emerges from this collusion-dissension dialectic. Listening as an embodied performance thus enacts both an awareness and recognition of the culturally- and socially-defined logics of sonic reception as well as the moments of critical dissension that enable cultural and social definition.

The stakes of recognizing critical dissent as a constitutive part of both sonic gentitud and the performances of listening it entails emerge from the need to dispel the assumption that aurality and orality are outside the domains of criticism and that pre-colonial Americans, and, by historical extension, contemporary Indigenous Peoples, embodied/embody some kind of natural and pristine state of complete social harmony that writing disrupted/disrupts. Indeed, in "Native Critics in the World," Osage scholar Robert Warrior views such critical dissent as imperative to the endurance of nationalism—tribal or state. He writes that "dissent is perhaps the primary sign of good health in nationalist discourse," implying that dissent from within the community wards off nationalism's centralizing, homogenizing, and, particularly for American Indian

nationalisms, essentializing tendencies (184). As I demonstrate in what follows, the performance of listening enacts precisely such critical dissent that allows for the sustenance and endurance of Native, Chicana/o, and Greater Mexican communities.

The attention that each work of fiction in this study devotes to the promises and perils of decolonial, critical, and differential listening affirms the learned, social, cultural, and performative aspects of listening in general, defying the theoretical argument common among scholars of orality and writing that listening is "natural" and "passive."[12] In dispelling this myth as one among others in the audio-visual litany, Sterne states, "Perhaps the biggest error of the audiovisual litany lies in its equation of hearing and listening. Listening is a directed, learned activity: it is a definite cultural practice. Listening requires hearing but is not simply reducible to hearing" (19). While maintaining the premise that hearing is a precondition of listening, I move a step beyond Sterne's definitions to argue that hearing is not only receptive and listening not only willful.

In my usage, hearing accords with Ihde's phenomenology and Sterne's normative listener; whereas, listening is far more discerning and, as such, perhaps, "out of control." As depicted in the works of fiction under consideration in this dissertation, a further precondition of listening is a political and differential consciousness of the social contours of collusion and dissension. In other words, even as they continue to privilege the agency of both hearer and listener, these literary depictions of listening reject a notion of "regressive listening" as Theodor Adorno proposes in "On the Fetish Character of Music." For Adorno markers of regressive listening include compulsions to familiarity and identification in accordance with the standards of normalization produced and

[12] Walter Ong's *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (1982) provides the most strident and tenacious example of this commonplace approach to aurality in his theory of "primary oral cultures" and consciousness untouched by literacy (1).

promoted by the culture industry. While familiarity and identification certainly play roles in the performance of listening, particularly in the pleasurable aspects of the experience, "regressive listening" flattens the dynamic repertoire of social and cultural meanings encoded in familiarity and identification into a unidirectional flow from mass production to passive consumption (47-48).

With listening in particular—as opposed, for instance, to reading—this understanding of cultural reception as passive and vulnerable to exposure to (in this case, sonic) penetration (and, therefore, subjection), has underwritten media and literacy studies well beyond the troubling of such a model in, for instance, literary and film studies.[13] We see the workings of this model that adheres to the presupposition that "you can close your eyes but not your ears," even in general accounts of the biology of hearing: external vibrations "enter" the inner ear, where they create further vibrations which translate in the brain to sonic frequencies. Sound is thus characterized as a foreign body to be incorporated by the internal structures of the mind. Such a unilinear definition fails to account for the process of (mis)recognition that moves from the "inside out" but only occasionally finds expression in the retranslations of the process in written, spoken, danced, or otherwise reiterated approximations of the ways in which sounds were heard (or not).

Hearing, then, as I will use the term throughout this work, denotes the physical process that necessarily precedes listening as well as the naturalization of (mis)recognized sound. The hearer relies on certain preconceptions derived from his/her

[13] For examples of the troubling of such positions in film and literary studies respectively, see Jacqueline Bobo's *Black Women as Cultural Readers* (1995) and Domino Perez's *There Was a Woman: La Llorona from Folklore to Popular Culture* (2008), both of which privilege the social and cultural locations of cultural consumers in their analyses. For a brief analysis of the excision of listening from theories of orality and writing, see my "Auralacy: From Plato to Podcasting and Back Again," co-authored with Emily Bloom.

experiences and "frameworks of knowledge," to borrow a phrase from Stuart Hall, in order to comprehend the voices ("Encoding, Decoding" 510). And just as, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the producers of sound reproduction technologies such as phonographs and radios had to naturalize the process of hearing through a mystification of the social relations inherent therein, so the hearer naturalizes as identification or recognition the sounds s/he hears or creates. Though the process of hearing may be ultimately assimilative, it occurs through a dialectic that requires not only the entrance of "external" sound, but its translation in accordance with pre-existing, "internal" sonic and socio-cultural associations. How we hear means not only the way we take in sounds, but also how we are conditioned to imbue certain sounds with social and cultural significance. Thus, even at the level of hearing, audibility is unstable as the transmission of meaningful sound relies on a certain equivalence between the "meaning structures" of producers and those of consumers, the discursive tropes that refer back to the set of social relations that characterize lived experience (510).

As it generates the action that will link to hearing, the tense, emotive, and performative act of listening speaks to a politics of listening in the construction of normative and legal forms of citizenship, which have historically privileged whiteness and masculinity. Such a politics is visible not only in the insightful texts of women like Anzaldúa and Boyce Davies but also in the very practices of sound reproduction technologies that white America has produced and that continue to circulate in global circuits of capital—attention to fidelity, death and technological preservation of the Native/Black/Feminine Other, insistence on privacy, sonic space as property, individualism. Because all of these have been projected onto sound, particularly after the advent of mechanical reproduction, sound's "purity" came to be defined according to the racialized, gendered, and white- and hetero-normative structures of the dominant society.

The sounds of the Other, then, were simply noise that could be preserved and forced into Euro-American and Western logic structures that included, for instance, musical notation. But they could not find audience in these groups in the strict sense of the word, which, as Janice Radway reminds, originally meant "to 'give ear' or attention to what had been spoken by another" ("Reception Study" 359).

To "give ear" or to listen is to address and be addressed by the power structures inherent to hearing, but it is also to surpass those social relations and material conditions while simultaneously contributing to them. Listening, in other words, exceeds the discursive structures of subjection that interpellate listeners because listening exceeds discourse. There is, in sonic reception, always an opacity—a "horizon of silence"—unassimilable to language that relies on listening's embodiment, its affective structures, and its filtering of social structures of meaning through the sieves of pleasure and pain. According to Jean-Luc Nancy, for instance, listening serves as the "tense" form of the sense of hearing: "If 'to hear' is to understand the sense (either in the so-called figurative sense, or in the so-called proper sense: to hear a siren, a bird, a drum is already each time to understand at least the rough outline of a situation, a context if not a text), to listen is to be straining toward a possible meaning, and consequently one that is not immediately accessible" (7). In this straining, this physical tension and attention—constituted affectively by desire, fulfillment, longing, satiety, shame, pride, anger, pleasure, melancholy, ecstasy—listening exceeds the interpellative tendencies implied in hearing a call. In Althusser's familiar scenario of interpellation, the structure of listening that occasions response to the police man's "Hey, you there!" is enabled by but also in excess of the interpellation itself ("From *Ideology*" 1504).[14] Listening's excess, or, more

[14] María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo has demonstrated the material effects of exactly such a situation in her analysis of the ways in which "Zapatismo is produced by, but also is in excess of the discourse of Mexican development" (213).

precisely, the politics of listening as transformative excess, thus serves to define the relationship between the listener and the production of sound as a relationship between the norms of a community and the social embodiment of those norms, which can also mean a rejection of or disidentification with them.

In narratives that cultivate audile realism through sonography, as in the fiction under consideration here, the act of listening as performance, politics, and everyday practice also guides to varying degrees the narrative's purchase on an experiential context and content that allows readers to map the text—and its attendant narrative structures—in a material and discursive history and politics. The inclusion of popular songs, musical styles, and musicians accessible to the reader through recordings, acts as a kind of quotation that, according to corrido analyst and folklorist John Holmes McDowell, "transport[s] beyond the narrative frame into the experiential substratum itself" (48). Holmes McDowell refers specifically to the historical content of many corridos, a Greater Mexican ballad form with strict formal and generic characteristics. Narrative songs that often relate heroic deeds, corridos frequently include quotations, as in "El Corrido de Gregorio Cortez," when the corridista would sing, "Decía Gregorio Cortez / con su pistola en la mano / 'No corran, rinches cobardes, / de un solo mexicano."[15] In this moment of quotation, where the corridista becomes the embodied transmission of the hero's voice, the narrative frame forges an identificatory link with the experiential "substratum" that it purports to represent. It makes the context of the story present through an act of quotation.

[15] "Gregorio Cortez said / with his pistol in his hand / 'Don't run you cowardly Rangers / from only one Mexican.'" This and all subsequent translations are my own unless otherwise noted. In order to preserve the linguistic and sonic texture of the original language and to perform a politics of code-switching, I have preferred to place the translations in the notes rather than in the main body of the text.

Such, I want to argue, is also the case for the inclusion of recorded popular music into the prose fiction I analyze in this dissertation. Though each work alludes to popular song traditions differently, each allusion or incorporation acts as a form of "quotation" that recalls a more generalized experience than those of the corridos. That is, in their textual and paratextual invocation of the songs, Silko, Cisneros, Alexie, and Martínez deliberately make visible an experiential politics of listening as decolonial resistance, hegemonic subversion, historical transformation, or differential consciousness.

In, for instance, Cisneros's musical epigraphs, which direct readers to women's performances of male-authored Mexican songs, the author textualizes a form of audition that serves to ground the text in a specific experiential context. I recently had the opportunity to ask Cisneros how she listens to the songs she has included in works like *Woman Hollering Creek* and *Caramelo* (2002). She replied that she liked to listen to the songs before writing to get into a certain time and place, but that it was impossible to listen to the music while writing because she devotes so much energy to the phonic texture of the language that music would interfere.[16] Her prefatory listening experience is translated in the fiction as equally prefatory paratext in the form of the epigraph. Similarly, in response to a question about the "artifacts" she includes throughout *Caramba*, Nina Marie Martínez points to the "Guide to the Rockola at the Big Five-Four" (see chapter four, Fig. 4.0) as the first artifact she created for the novel, drawing a connection between her listening experience and the reader's: "While writing the book," she explains, "there was always either rockabilly or mariachi music playing in the background. I think if the reader knows the music on the jukebox, then he or she will come away with a better sense of place" ("About the Author"). The places and times of

[16] From her October 12 reading at Texas State University, San Marcos, Texas.

the narratives, then, resound in the authors' musical selections, offering readers and listeners a guide or map to the social, historical, and political contours of each narrative.

By "quoting" extant recorded musical traditions and thereby opening a space for a (dis)identificatory relation to an experiential substratum that relies on listening, each author implicitly recognizes the extent to which both music and listening locate themselves, their characters, and their readers. In rendering a potential for (dis)identificatory experience, the fiction does not necessarily suggest the conflation of all of those actors; rather, it makes visible textually and paratextually the multiple locations from which meaning is made in both listening and reading and places in relief the spaces between each of the actors in the meaning-making complex. The fiction sonographically maps meaning-making practices. In so doing, the text invites the reader not only to listen to the songs, but also to listen to them across the chronotopes of raced, gendered, classed, and national difference.

Understanding the experiential substratum on which each song-in-text draws requires an understanding, then, of the social and historical situations of the actors, including the readers, in the quoted context. As such, it requires a careful attention to experience that, as I indicate above, surpasses the bonds and strictures of interpellative discourse. Because of its embodiment and its affective components that move toward an always-potential meaning conditioned by previous experience, this understanding of listening, and specifically the politics of listening in non-dominative communities, treads the line between essentialism and experience. In this regard I have found useful Robert Warrior's succinct yet sophisticated summary of his usage of experience in the following passage from *The People and the Word* (2005): "Experience, mediated in representations of it through language, is the material manifestation of the connection between Native texts and Native lives. But experience is not, as I have been arguing, the pure point of

origin or the conclusion or be-all and end-all, but a critical point for coming to an understanding, an interpretation, a reading of the world in which we live" (xxvi). Indeed, attending in narrative to the experience of listening, and particularly listening to pop music, always places readers in medias res, in the middle of an intercontextual flow of ideas, sounds, texts, and practices.[17]

The attention that each text devotes to the cultural, political, and theoretical work of material culture, paratexts, and narrative and poetic form, serves to frame these flows as material engagements with Laguna Pueblo, Chicana/o or Greater Mexican, and Spokane experiences. Readers are uniquely positioned to access a dynamic and unfixed listening experience made possible by recordings of the popular music cited in the text. Additionally, however, they are also guided by the texture of the narrative, its manipulation of audile realism, to an understanding of what the characters listen *to* or *for*, that which constitutes the always potential meaning and structure of feeling toward which listening strains or tends. That potential is, again, conditioned by the historicity, materiality, and yes, discursivity of experience, yet is also irreducible to the limits of those conditioning elements. Because listening interprets sound according to a framework of socially-derived and –conditioned experience, it tacitly assumes a critical function in the formation of community.

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[17] I borrow the term "intercontextual" from Arjun Appadurai, who, in *Modernity at Large* (1996), contends, "Text production and context production have different logics and metapragmatic features. Contexts are produced in the complex imbrication of discursive and nondiscursive practices, and so the sense in which contexts imply other contexts, so that each context implies a global network of contexts, is different from the sense in which texts imply other texts, and eventually all texts. Intertextual relations, about which we now know a fair amount, are not likely to work in the same way as *intercontextual* relations" (187). Appadurai argues that in an increasingly globalized and/or transnational world, one in which migration borders on normative, a theory of intercontextuality is necessary to theorizing the workings of globalization. Though I use the word rarely, I maintain in this dissertation that the authors in this study have performed precisely such intercontextuality by, first, bringing popular music forms into narrative fiction and, second, by bringing the worlds and agents of the songs and their material forms of sonic (re)production into the worlds of the narrative.

What is powerful about the works of fiction under consideration in this study is that they incorporate each of these social, political, and theoretical strands that constitute listening into narrative forms; they textualize performances of audition rather than just orality or audibility. Moving away from an understanding of these works as textual reproductions of oral traditions and toward a conception of their narrative extrapolation of a performance of listening entails a concomitant move away from the legacies of debates over the use of oral tradition in both American Indian and Chicana/o literary criticism.

The critical reception of Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*, for example, converges and swells around the efficacy of her use of Laguna Pueblo oral traditions. As one of the novels, alongside Kiowa and Cherokee author N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* (1968) and Blackfeet and Gros Ventre author James Welch's *Winter in the Blood* (1974) and *The Death of Jim Loney* (1979), which contributed to the formation of an American Indian literary "renaissance" or emergent American Indian canon, *Ceremony*'s critical reception has been overdetermined by critical attempts to explain the seeming anomaly of the American Indian novel. Much early criticism of the novel tends toward hybrid readings that posit it as a narrative of "the divided culture hero" as a metonym for the divided tribe (Lincoln 236), as a narrative of "mediation" between Native and Western cultures and cultural forms (Ruppert, "Mediation"), or a novel of "homing" where the protagonist leaves the tribal community to return and restore himself and the tribe to a sense of balance (Bevis 580). Acoma Pueblo poet and critic Simon Ortiz's 1981 article, "Towards a National Indian Literature: Cultural Authenticity in Nationalism," which posits *Ceremony* and Native writing and performance (as opposed to strictly oral traditions) as an affirmation of tribal nationalism and resistance proves the exception to this rule.

Ortiz's piece notwithstanding, the predominance of return and hybrid readings of the novel have prompted Muskogee Creek author and literary critic Craig Womack to write, "Those who write the articles teach these particular works in their classes. They would have to rethink the Indian world if they began teaching fiction outside of recovery, ethnography, homecoming, retribalization, and oral tradition modes that have been prevalent in the popular fiction and its attendant criticism" ("A Single Decade" 17). Such "rethinking" of the Indian world would also imply a reconceptualization of the influence of orature on literature and vice versa as well as a retelling of the history of writing in the Americas. Womack himself initiates such a project in his *Red on Red* (1999), and, more recently, Abenaki literary historian Lisa Brooks (2008), Chicano rhetorician Damián Baca (2008), and Cherokee literary critic Chris Teuton (2010) all engage the extent to which contemporary Native writings do not represent a departure from Native epistemologies that necessitates a "return."

Louis Owens's *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel* (1992) clearly stakes the terrain of the debate as he asserts that the Native novel tradition seeks to balance the traditional with the modern by incorporating the traditional elements of oral storytelling with the modern technology of writing. He says explicitly that "Native American writing represents an attempt to recover identity and authenticity by invoking and incorporating the world found within the oral tradition—the reality of myth and ceremony—an authorless 'original' literature" (11). To reclaim and incorporate oral storytelling traditions within what he deems a Western/Eurocentric form, Native authors must do a fair amount of translating what was, for the original "primarily oral" peoples implicitly and uncritically known. "Traditionally," he writes, "a storyteller's audience consisted of tribe or clan members who could be counted on to contribute a wealth of intimate knowledge to the telling of any story, to thus actively participate in the dynamics

of the story's creation" (13). Although this statement in and of itself does not necessarily differentiate the primarily oral storyteller from the fiction-writing storyteller, Owens also relies on Dell Hymes's assertion that "a detailed meta-language for dealing with form—was not needed. Performer and audience shared an implicit knowledge of language and ways of speaking" (qtd. in Owens 13).[18] This uncritical, indeed seemingly unconscious, process by which discursive forms were, in Hymes's view, apprehended among pre-colonial Native peoples defines Native authenticity for Owens. Modernity and its attendant demand for critical subjectivities, then, always places Native peoples on a quest for their bygone, fractured identities, made whole again only through hybridization.

Instead of recapitulating to a conception of a pristine oral world about which we simply cannot know, attending to the material manifestations of listening depicted in each of the works in this dissertation grants some agency and critical or technical ability to listening audiences. That is, drawing on the collusion-dissension model of listening that I propose above, we recognize that when an oral storyteller uses a word—like "Dypaloh"—or a phrase—like "Era una mujer"—or a formula—like a Homeric epithet—the associations of that word with other situations, other moments of listening rendered familiar through the use of familiar language, cue the audience for certain sets of expectations. Tracing the cultural materiality and historicity of the songs included in each work reveals the culturally and socially conditioned contexts of listening to the songs, the play of expectation and familiarity surrounding the "playing" of each one. But by staging that "playing" within the parameters of Native and Chicana/o narrative, each author

[18] This explanation is undermined by both Milman Parry and Albert Lord's work with the Turkish "singers of tales" on which they based their thesis on the oral epic composition of the Homeric poems, as well as extant records of Nahua-language dialogues on the nature and forms of in xochitl, in cuicatl, which translates roughly as poetics. See Lord's *The Singer of Tales* (1965) and "Poetics: A Dialogue of Flower and Song" in *In the Language of Kings* (2001).

dramatizes the politics of listening when the contexts of musical production enter markedly different social and cultural soundscapes.

Extending the strategies of collusion and dissension to contemporary Native listening practices, historian John Troutman elucidates the cultural work of music in Indian Country in *Indian Blues: American Indians and the Politics of Music, 1879-1934* (2008). Wedding federal Indian policy from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to Native musical and performance practices, Troutman frames the stakes of audition for American Indian studies as one that depends upon documentary evidence: "Textual analysis of song lyrics . . . can perhaps reveal something about the songwriter but nothing about the listener—how do we know what significance the audience took from the song if we have no record of its interpretation? Who listened to it? And what was, in fact, the intent of the singer or performer?" (9). Silko and Alexie update the historical documentation to which Troutman refers by offering narrative accounts of the ways in which the communities in and around Laguna Pueblo or the Spokane Reservation have used music as a means of negotiating not just federal Indian policy but the various forms of encroachment—ideological as much as territorial—that comes with enduring colonialism. The various listening practices that Silko and Alexie dramatize, then, offer depictions of listening that draw attention away from the slippery questions of authenticity, tradition, and identity that characterize literary critical emphasis on the place of oral tradition in American Indian literatures. Instead, they offer material practices of negotiation that detail the everyday practices of cultural citizenship that define contemporary forms of Native resistance to colonialism and the survival of tribal self-determination.[19]

[19] Although the term "self-determination" has historically been imbricated in neo-liberal discourses that have undergirded twentieth century policies of U.S. imperial expansion, it resonates differently in Indian Country. Indeed, "self-determination," like "nationalism" and "sovereignty," resounds, as an echo, from the

Both *Ceremony*, as I have begun to illustrate above, and *Reservation Blues* thus enter the critical terrain of contemporary American Indian literary studies, which is characterized by a split between the hybridist and nationalist approaches to American Indian literature and culture. Cherokee literary and legal scholar Jace Weaver, Creek author and critic Craig Womack, and Osage scholar Robert Warrior offer an extended discussion of the terms of that split in their collaborative volume, *American Indian Literary Nationalism* (2006). American Indian literary nationalism comes under critique by hybridists (such as Owens) for what appears to the latter as an essentialist position that only Native people can do responsible Native literary criticism. The nationalists, on the other hand, argue not that non-Natives cannot read Native literature, but rather that any reading of Native literature should privilege the contemporary voices of Native scholars, the political realities of Native communities as sovereign tribal nations, and the historical experiences of Native peoples themselves in the construction of their own histories and narratives. Placing the many voices that have joined the nationalist chorus under the umbrella "American Indian Literary Nationalism," however, could mask the heterogeneity of the ideas that have emerged from under that heading. Maintaining tribal and intellectual sovereignty is viewed sometimes as a separatist strategy of remaining within the tribal nation, sometimes as following ancient and modern "intellectual trade routes," and other times as "upbuilding" Native communities in non-Native spaces.[20]

Recently, Christopher Taylor has suggested that *Reservation Blues* is uniquely positioned to bridge the differences between these two dominant threads of contemporary

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very hills and valleys of American Indian political difference. I use it throughout this essay to designate the capacity for and right to control of the decision-making and knowledge-production processes that affect American Indian communities.

[20] For a discussion of tribal sovereignty as separatism, see Womack's *Red on Red*; for "intellectual trade routes," see Warrior's *The People and the Word*; and for a discussion of "upbuilding" Native networks and communities, see Brooks's "At the Gathering Place."

American Indian literary criticism. He suggests, for instance, that "[c]riticism of the novel would undoubtedly benefit from the nationalist criticism Womack advocates," including attention to Spokane spiritual traditions, Spokane traditional musics and their relationships to rock and roll, and Spokane or Interior Salish languages (40). He modulates this point, though, with the suggestions that a strictly nationalist reading might also miss certain key details of the novel that emerge from its engagement with African American blues and jazz traditions as well as rock and roll. He cautions, however, "to overstress cultural hybridity or the inevitable fluidity of identity . . . would be to misread the novel. The Native characters in the novel do not lose their Native identities by venturing into rock music. Rather, rock music seems to go through a process of indigenization" (41). That Taylor selects *Reservation Blues* as an exemplary novel through which to explicate the mutual applicability of both critical trajectories shows a bit of a departure in criticism about the novel, which tends to focus on the *absence* of specifically Spokane traditions and the novel's capitulation to Pan-Indian stereotypes.

Perhaps most infamously and in a strain that reverberates throughout criticism of *Reservation Blues*, Spokane critic Gloria Bird condemns the novel as an "exaggeration of despair" on the reservation and among American Indian peoples more generally. Echoing that sentiment, Cherokee literary critic Sean Teuton condemns Alexie's portrayal of American Indian poverty and alcoholism in *Reservation Blues*, suggesting that the novel risks naturalizing poverty as an essential characteristic of Indianness (207). On the other hand, Taos Pueblo critic P. Jane Hafen offers a more sympathetic reading of *Reservation Blues* as "realist" in its depiction of the ways in which young American Indian people do listen to various mainstream popular musics on the reservation (71). In this assessment, Hafen speaks from her own experiences to eschew the "techniques of post-structuralism, cultural studies, post-colonialisms or the amorphous postmodernism" in favor of a mode

of critique that "acknowledge[s] that Alexie's work depicts real contemporary peoples who are not historical artifacts, anthropological phenomena, objects of literary theories, or simply earth's children" (78). Taking up Hafen's challenge in his monograph *Muting White Noise: Native American and European American Novel Traditions* (2006), James Cox addresses the potential efficacy of a nationalist reading of Alexie's work that does not address the detrimental threat that popular culture poses to Native peoples. He writes, "Although Alexie's fiction is embedded in specific cultural histories and contexts, he does not make an explicit defense of homelands and sovereignty. In fact, [many of his stories] demand very little consideration of these issues. Popular culture narratives, however, that enhance, enable and justify colonial domination and plot the inevitable absence of Native Americans from the landscape *are* challenges to traditional homelands and sovereignty" (195). Though with notable differences, the critical legacies of both *Ceremony* and *Reservation Blues* document the stakes of these two now-canonical works in their representations of Native self-determination in a colonial political context.

In the context of the literary critical emphasis on oral traditions, the claims to Native self-determination in this study emerge not as an attempt to affirm or deny the influence of oral traditions on the novel, but rather to suggest that continued attention to oral traditions as the primary basis for authenticity rehearses the primitive-modernist binary on which developmentalist conceptions of self-determination are based.[21] The insistence on oral tradition in novels that, themselves, insist on their own *visibility*, textuality, and materiality tends to distract from the very concrete material forces at work in both the novels and the Native communities they depict and from which they emerge. Supplanting the oral-written model for an emphasis on the material conditions of

[21] For an extended discussion of the influence of discourses of development on discourses of self-determination, see Saldaña-Portillo (2003).

experience, "Sonic Gentitud" seeks to engage with materiality of the sonic technologies and practices of listening made visible in the novels' texts and paratexts.

One of the experiences each work documents is that of migration and its effects on citizenship in and across tribal- and state-national boundaries. Because of contemporary global circuits of communication and, in particular, transnational movements of music, listening as I have defined it and as each text depicts its contours proves a useful heuristic for thinking through the effects of transnational migrations on questions of cultural citizenship, particularly as these questions emerge from and affect Native and ethnic Mexican peoples and Peoplehood. That is, I want to consider the ways in which belonging has been formulated from within tribal-nationalist and cultural-nationalist communities as critical responses to the subordinating frameworks of belonging-as-citizenship that have been formulated in state-nationalist and even transnational contexts. That these two contexts comingle in the songs and narratives in "Sonic Gentitud" is no accident; they represent one of the clashes of context(s) that constitute song-in-text's intercontextual and differential listening performance.

Extricating migration from the "return" or "retribalization" models of American Indian literary criticism has benefited from the conversation this work stages between Native and Chicana/o critical trajectories. Specifically, the concept of Greater Mexico, originally articulated by Américo Paredes but refashioned by Mexicana/os and Chicana/os alike, offers a broader definition for the reaches of American Indian literary nationalism. As with those who migrate across and establish communal and cultural bonds throughout Greater Mexico, Laguna as depicted in *Ceremony* and Spokane as depicted in *Reservation Blues* are imagined as affecting and effecting communities beyond the borders of those tribal nations. As Paredes articulates in his examinations of corridos and canciones, cultural productions and practices influence peoples irrespective

of national boundaries even as they emerge in the contests over the definitions of culture that are expected to dominate within those same boundaries.

In 1958, Paredes's foundational work of proto-Chicano studies, *With His Pistol in His Hand*, made the unique and suggestive claim that the paradigmatic form of the Mexican corrido was created in and through the border conflicts between Mexicans living on the U.S. side of the border and increasing Euro-American immigration to what was, prior to 1848, the northern half of the Mexican Republic. Out of the crucible of border conflict, corridistas not only found their voices as Mexicans; they also found a hearing in and among Mexican communities on both sides of the national border. In his 1976 *Texas-Mexican Cancionero*, Paredes expands on the relevance of song for an understanding of the intricate bi-national relationship among the various peoples that comprise Greater Mexico. During the height of U.S.-ethnic Mexican conflict along the border, Paredes writes, "The Mexican-American in the Southwest felt that he was living in a part of Mexico occupied by a foreign country," that is, the United States (28). Since 1848, however, when "the México de afuera . . . composed of all the persons of Mexican origins in the United States," was originally divided from the Mexican Republic, the contours of Greater Mexico have constantly shifted. Where, for instance, pocha/o, Pachuca/o, and Chicana/o cultures were at various times derided in Mexico, the second half of the twentieth century saw Mexican artists such as Guillermo Gómez-Peña, intellectuals such as Carlos Monsivaís, and musicians like roc-en-español band Maldita Vecindad come to embrace chicanidad, pochismo, and pachuquismo. On the other hand, Mexico in the minds and hearts of Chicana/os and Mexican Americans has spanned a range of responses from Chicana/o-EZLN alliances and participation to support for conservative U.S. anti-immigrant legislation.

These shifting relationships prompted Chicano literary critic Héctor Calderón (2001) to call for a Chicana/o literary critical approach that recognizes Mexico as "México, la otra cara de los chicanos" (xviii).[22] Considering its publication in 1991 on the eve of the passage of NAFTA, Sandra Cisneros's *Woman Hollering Creek, and Other Stories* is uniquely positioned to address the dialectical exchanges on which Greater Mexico is founded, as evidenced in the critical reception of the work. Though many critics have examined the various uses to which Cisneros puts popular culture in this collection—from Sonia Saldívar-Hull's examinations of the telenovelas in "Woman Hollering Creek" to Leticia Romo's questioning of the subversiveness of the Barbie dolls in "Barbie-Q" to Jean Wyatt's and Harryette Mullen's readings of the gummy bears in "Never Marry a Mexican"—as yet the songs have received only passing scholarly attention. Calderón notes, for example, the epigraphs' presence and placement on each section's title page (175), and Mullen places them within the "untranslatability of [subaltern] experience." But beyond identifying the songs as anchors in a Mexican song tradition that speaks explicitly to readers familiar with the traditions themselves, neither Calderón nor Mullen analyzes the songs' larger import for the collection as a whole. However, the cultural work the songs perform, including the listening experience to which they direct the reader, locates *Woman Hollering Creek* squarely within a Greater Mexican transnational feminist tradition.

Complementing Calderón's reading of Cisneros's simultaneous embrace of a re-membered Mexico and critical excavation of discursive Mexicanidad, Daniel Cooper Alarcón's *The Aztec Palimpsest* also contributes to the conversation on *Woman Hollering Creek*'s strategies for cultivating Greater Mexican belonging. For Cooper Alarcón,

[22] "Mexico, the other face of the Chicanos."

Cisneros moves away from the romanticized, tourist-driven conception of Mexico that he identifies in other Chicano literature, such as Rudolfo Anaya's "B. Traven Is Alive and Well in Cuernavaca" and Gary Soto's *Living Up the Street*. Instead, he writes, Cisneros "is stressing that ideas about what exactly 'Mexican' is shift as these intracultural differences are factored in, and that different forms of privilege (e.g., economic, social, and political) frequently depend on asserting the differences of another person or group as static and inferior" (147). Cooper Alarcón's assessment of Chicana/o literature's engagement with Mexico, either real or imagined, contributes, in turn, to more recent critical engagements with the dialectical relationship between Mexican and Chicana/o indigenismo by Sheila Marie Contreras and Saldaña-Portillo.

Saldaña-Portillo's *The Revolutionary Imagination in the Americas and the Age of Development* (2003) and Contreras's *Blood Lines: Myth, Indigenism, and Chicana/o Literature* (2008) both re-examine the legacies of Mexico's state-formation and the entrenched ideologies of mestizaje and indigenismo for Chicana and Chicano activists and writers. Much as the Mexican state's advocacy of mestizaje and indigenismo as official national discourses tended to elide the political struggles of contemporary Indigenous peoples, they argue, so their embrace in Chicana/o nationalism and activism have tended to ignore the political struggles and realities of contemporary Indigenous peoples both in the United States and in Mexico. Contreras sounds a call to Chicana/o scholars that complements Calderón's as she enumerates the challenges to "Chicana/o Indigenous history": "to acknowledge the contemporary realities of Native peoples in the United States, as well as in Mexico; to recognize the centrality of land rights in American Indian politics; to reconsider the historical and social erasure of the Indian in the mestizo and yet recognize the ways, rhetorical and material, in which mestizos obliged that erasure" (40). "Sonic Gentitud" seeks to respond to both of those calls by placing

American Indian and Chicana/o literatures in conversation to productively ascertain the resonances and dissonances between them.

As it sets the stage for the decolonial imaginaries, in Emma Pérez's terms, that each subsequent text will enact in its own form, my first chapter, "Laguna in the Grooves: Materiality and the Poetics of Space in *Ceremony*," mobilizes many of these discourses and strategies. Analyzing the formal literary and cultural material means through which Silko dramatizes a Greater Laguna politics of listening, I trace the confluences between her poetics of enjambment, the jukebox's playback of Hank Williams, the Victrola, and the flamenco dance as they make available certain techniques of listening to the Laguna, Indigenous Mexican, and Diné characters in the novel. Though each practice ultimately centers on Laguna and the ceremonial restoration of balance, they do so through a recognition of the affective "fullness" of apparently empty space as heralded first in Silko's technique of enjambment.

The process of recognition and negotiation, so crucial to listening, continues in Sandra Cisneros's *Woman Hollering Creek, and Other Stories*, as I examine in chapter two, "Tócame una canción, Sandra: Mexicanidad and Pocha/o Voice in *Woman Hollering Creek*." Where, in Silko, recognizing the sounds of assimilation that become a precondition for U.S. citizenship counters recognizing the sounds of Indigenous survival, in Cisneros these forms of recognition are further complicated by the discourses of mexicanidad that sound out of the musical epigraphs Cisneros uses to set up each section of the short story collection. Both Silko and Cisneros deal in different ways with questions of Mexican indigeneity; in the attention she devotes to what I term pocha/o voice—an active negotiation of romantic and maligned discourses of Mexicanidad—Cisneros ultimately figures indigeneity as a migrant reality that recurs in post-

Movimiento Chicana/o consciousness to trouble the legacies of its objectification in the movement.

In my third chapter, "Soundtracks of Safety in Sherman Alexie's *Reservation Blues*," I explore the ways in which Spokane and Coeur d'Alene author Sherman Alexie takes up this question of appropriation but in a white colonial and New Age rather than Chicana/o context, though the resonances between the two certainly abound. Reading the conclusion of the novel as an opening to the *Reservation Blues* soundtrack composed by Alexie and Colville singer-songwriter Jim Boyd, I argue that the characters' failures in the novel stem not from Alexie's inability to imagine success, as Gloria Bird has argued, but rather from the overdetermination of historical determinist and postmodern New Age texts that circumscribe the possibilities for Native personhood, collective or individual. Reading the novel as a manual for listening to the soundtrack reveals the hopeful potential of both.

I turn in my fourth chapter to Nina Marie Martínez's debut novel, *¡Caramba!: A Tale Told in Turns of the Card*. *Caramba*, so recently released that no criticism has yet been published, chronicles the lives of the residents and migrants inhabiting the space of Lava Landing and the soundscapes that create it; both the novel and the town rely on critical negotiations of the cultural logics of Mexican and U.S. popular music traditions as they structure the multiple forms of belonging that come to constitute Lava Landing's imagined community. I thus argue in "*Caramba*'s Gran Baile of Listening" that Martínez offers the spaces transformed by music and bodies in dance as sites for migrant, feminist, and queer performances of belonging within an affective structure of sentimiento that the cultural logics of the musical traditions themselves disseminate.

Finally, in the Conclusion, I explore some pedagogical implications of literature of listening. Beginning with some observations about the functions of literature, I posit

that this literature not only maps, sonographs, and narrates listening; it also teaches. That readers can draw lessons on listening out of these texts further confirms my implicit argument that listening is a learned activity even as it reveals how little time we spend reflecting on *how* we learn to listen. I thus offer some strategies for the teaching of listening that emerge from hemispheric American literatures and Indigenous American pedagogical practices that pair listening and reading, auralacy and literacy.

Ultimately, it is not only what but also how I have learned from my mother's original storytelling moment that has produced this work. Certainly my own critical reflection and critical listening practices have led me to excavate the silent landscapes of hers and others' stories. But the story and the storytelling themselves already contained the lessons I was to learn; listening for them and learning to listen in the appropriate ways framed my responsibility and response-ability to the story. The story is now no longer Kika's alone; I share in its burdens, pains, and pleasures to disseminate its meanings and messages to all who are willing to listen.

Chapter One: Laguna in the Grooves: Materiality and the Poetics of Space in *Ceremony*

Since its publication in 1977, self-identified Mexican, White, and Laguna Pueblo author Leslie Marmon Silko's first novel *Ceremony* has garnered a critical mass of attention. Though some, like Acoma Pueblo poet and scholar Simon Ortiz (1981), place the novel in a specifically Laguna tribal-nationalist context, many others have read the story as a search for identity.[23] Though the two frameworks are certainly not mutually exclusive, the identity quest paradigm (into which readers are frequently cast as questing heroes in their own right) has the effect of elevating Tayo, the central protagonist, to the level of hero at the risk of excluding the border community in and around Laguna, even when the inter-tribal and transnational community is recognized as integral to the movement and pattern of the ceremony. Cherokee literary critic and author Louis Owens, for instance, urges that Tayo's mixed-blood identity is privileged as a reconciliation of dual and competing worldviews and voices in the body of the questing individual. Cherokee literary and legal scholar Jace Weaver (1997), on the other hand, points out that blood discourse was less important for Silko than community, writing, "Sovereignty, community, and the vitality and power of a tradition that is constantly evolving are fundamental categories for the Laguna author. Rejecting racially based essentializing, she stated in a 1980 interview, 'Community is tremendously important. That's where a person's identity has to come from, not from racial blood quantum levels'" (132). In this layered quotation, Silko's use of the term "identity" appears in the shadow not only of community, but of Weaver's use of the fraught term "sovereignty."[24] Tribal sovereignty

[23] See, for example, Lincoln's *Native American Renaissance*, Ruppert's "Reader's Lessons," and Owens's *Other Destinies*.

[24] I recognize, with Weaver, that sovereignty is a politically loaded term in Native Studies and in Indian Country more broadly. Where, for instance, Mohawk activist and scholar Taiaiake Alfred (2002) argues that the very conception of sovereignty derives from a European model of governance, Standing Rock

in this context recalls Ortiz's contention, well-known to scholars of American Indian literary nationalism, that the Native novel tradition remains as authentically Native as the oral tradition by virtue of its adherence to an ethic of resistance to colonization and assimilation. Notably, *Ceremony* is the novel to which he turns as exemplary of decolonial resistance.

Following Ortiz and eschewing a "hybrid" or "return" reading of *Ceremony*, I seek in this chapter to trace the techniques through which Silko links her written narrative practice to a specifically Laguna Pueblo decolonial praxis evinced in the politics of listening, an oppositional and transformative politics. To do so means recognizing the challenge that Crow Creek Sioux scholar Elizabeth Cook-Lynn raises with regard to tribally-specific literary criticism. Despite her earlier praise for the attention Silko's later novel, *Almanac of the Dead* (1991), gives to land reclamation and reconquest, Cook-Lynn curtails the possibility of a tribally-specific reading of any of Silko's work "because Laguna falls under the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo—very different circumstances from the Plains Indian Treaty paradigm" (93). Cook-Lynn seems to suggest that because Laguna, like many other recognized and unrecognized tribal nations of the Southwest, was circumvented by the 1848 Treaty that ceded the northern half of Mexico's territory to the United States, considerations such as sovereignty or self-determination that arise out of nationalist readings of "treaty-status" tribal literatures cannot find purchase in Silko's works. On the contrary, I contend that attending to Laguna's multiple colonizations—as

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Sioux historian, theologian, and activist Vine Deloria, Jr. locates sovereignty in the continued maintenance of tribal traditions precisely as the governing ideology of self-determination. "Numerous references to sovereignty," Deloria contends, "cite the notion of a distinct people, separate from others, as the chief characteristic of Indian sovereignty, indicating that so long as the cultural identity of Indians remains intact no specific political act undertaken by the United States government can permanently extinguish peoples as sovereign entities ("Self-Determination" 25-26). For a literary critical examination of the relationship between Peoplehood and "intellectual sovereignty" that also closely examines Deloria's impact on contemporary Native criticism, see Warrior's *Tribal Secrets*. (1995).

evidenced by the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo—opens up the possibility of "rethinking the Indian world" to include the broader Indigenous world on which Laguna's survival depends. (Womack, "Single Decade" 17). And it is through literary technique and attention to the material forms of listening that Silko draws attention to Laguna's maintenance of a decolonial tribal center.

According to Chicana historian Emma Pérez, "the decolonial imaginary in Chicana/o history is a theoretical tool for uncovering the hidden voices of Chicanas that have been relegated to silences, to passivity, to that third space where agency is enacted . . ." (xvi). *Ceremony*'s decolonial imaginary, however, does not just uncover or unearth; rather, it cuts through colonial discourse and naming to make the gaps visible and audible. In order to demonstrate the workings of this decolonial imaginary, I take up Muskogee Creek author and critic Craig Womack's challenge to "rethink the Indian world" in *Ceremony* by attending to the listening practices of less chronicled characters in the novel, particularly those around whom discourses of migration and Mexico swell and converge. Because the politics of listening in *Ceremony* are defined by the characters' various forms of listening for survival, its decolonial praxis depends on recognizing characters like Harley, Diné healer Betonie, la Mexicana Night Swan, Tayo's uncle Josiah, and even his aunt Thelma as participants in the storied ceremony, as members of "the Indian world" rather than merely as Tayo's "helpers" (Owens, *Other Destinies* 180).

In the geopolitical space of the novel—a global space that converges at Laguna—each of the members of this community touch each other in a fragile web of language and story, as the Laguna medicine man Old Ku'oosh tells Tayo in the old language. But because colonial practices have separated the People from their languages, both the modes of listening and the material forms through which sound is reproduced effect the

contested boundaries of Laguna tribal self-determination, boundaries formed over a history of migrations and multiple colonizations. Silko's decolonial poetics and praxis enters that separation, making it visible as an occupied space and audible as a forced silence.

As Silko heralds in her poetics of enjambment, a technique that replicates linear excess as well as movement across lines, in the mythical story-poems that punctuate the prose narrative, space, separation, and distance are neither empty nor insignificant. In the post-World War II period in which the novel is set, however, the community (not just Tayo) must learn to listen for the differences between the "emptiness" of space that the witchery touts and the ways in which space and silence are filled with the infinite potential of unspoken but "felt" meanings. The politics of listening as indicative of Laguna's multiple colonizations—first Spanish, then Mexican, then U.S.—emerges in the multiple forms of listening and/as an embodied, affective, and non-discursive decolonial practice. The ways in which Harley listens to Hank Williams on the jukebox, Tayo listens to "Y Volveré" on Night Swan's Victrola, and Josiah listens to Night Swan's flamenco dance, reveals *Ceremony*'s politics of listening, ultimately, as a fulfillment of what we might call Greater Laguna—encompassing the Diné and Indigenous Mexican actors in Laguna's ceremonial healing—stories of survival. These are stories that have guided the Pueblos and other Indigenous peoples with whom the Pueblos have exchanged goods, stories, and ideas since "time immemorial, time back."[25] And, so, it is with Silko's

[25] Although the phrase "time immemorial" is a commonplace in reference to First Nations, Indigenous, and Aboriginal peoples' storytelling traditions and forms of governance, this particular phrasing, "time immemorial, time back," comes from former Laguna Pueblo Governor Paul Johnson's statements at the Meeting of the All-Pueblo Council convened in 1934 to discuss John Collier's plans for what would become the Indian Reorganization Act (1935). See Vine Deloria, Jr., *The Indian Reorganization Act: Congresses and Bills* for a full transcription of the council meeting.

particular poetics in evoking such stories that I begin in order to explore the stories' fulfillment through the politics of listening.

I. LANDMARKS FOR LISTENING

A recognizable structure emerges from the "oral" story-poems that guide the narrative, ordering not only Tayo's ceremonial experience, as many have argued, but also the material forms through which spaces—geopolitical, textual, and communal—are made meaningful.[26] For the purposes of my reading, those material forms have everything to do with the distance between reading and listening to an oral story or listening to a jukebox or a Victrola, an experiential distance on which Silko capitalizes. She thus uses her textualized representations of the oral tradition to map the politics of listening as recognition and experience of the differences between material forms of trauma and material forms of healing. In that sense, the story-poems provide landmarks for listening much as a hunting or migration story might tell its listeners how to maneuver a landscape. In her essay, "Interior and Exterior Landscapes," Silko describes the utility of after-dinner hunting stories at Laguna:

> These accounts contained information of critical importance about the behavior and migratory patterns of mule deer. Hunting stories carefully described the key landmarks and locations of fresh water. Thus, a deer-hunt story might also serve as a map. Lost travelers and lost piñon-nut gatherers have been saved by sighting a rock formation they recognize only because they once heard a hunting story describing this rock formation. (*Yellow Woman* 32)

[26] Regarding the aurality/orality of the story-poems, see Silko, "Interview": "I write [oral stories] down because I like seeing how I can translate this sort of feeling or flavor or sense of a story that's told and heard onto the page. . . . And I use translate in the broadest sense. I don't mean translate from the Laguna Pueblo language to English, I mean the feeling or the sense that language is being used orally. So I play with the page and things that you could do on the page, and repetitions. When you have an audience, when you're telling a story and people are listening, there's repetition of crucial points. That's something that on the printed page looks really crummy and is redundant and useless, but in the actual telling is necessary" (87).

Similarly, reading the textual cues Silko offers in her story-poems reveals critical information about the acts of listening depicted in the novel.

Many of the formal moves that Silko makes in later story-poems and that provide clues as to *Ceremony*'s specific politics of listening appear in the opening creation story-poem first as sign-posts for later readings.[27] Silko relies, for instance, on the accumulation of modifying nouns and phrases in order to incrementally provide details, to at once nuance and characterize the story-poem's subject. The first line of the Thought-Woman story-poem contains a transliteration as modifier while the rest of the first stanza describes her act of creation:

Ts'its'tsi'nako, Thought-Woman
is sitting in her room
and whatever she thinks about
appears.

In the next stanza, though, the modifiers (underlined below) occur on lines subsequent to their antecedents:

She thought of her sisters,
<u>Nau'ts'ity'I and I'tcts'ity'i</u>
and together they created the Universe

[27] In order to avoid reading the novel as an isomorphic representation of Laguna cosmology and community rather than a literary construct, I attend in this section to the specifically literary elements of the story-poems even as I take for granted Silko's self-identification as a Laguna woman shaped by her understanding of the community's traditions. Another Laguna author, Paula Gunn Allen, emphasizes the potential dangers of opening up to a broader readership the stories in the story-poems, which she argues are clan stories "not to be told outside the clan" ("Special Problems" 383). Though in a later interview ("Listening"), Silko denies that she has trespassed against a sacred tradition, she also recognizes that the need for secrecy arises out of an anthropological/ethnographic stance that fails to respect the sacredness and embodied, integrated spirituality of those stories and ceremonies. For that reason, in this study, I also do not turn to the works on Keresan epistemology by Franz Boas, Hamilton Tyler, Elsie Clews Parsons, or any other of a number of popularly cited ethnographic works that outline in ahistorical and objectified terms the practices of the Keresan peoples, of which the Laguna tribal nation forms a part.

this world

and the four worlds below (1)

The names, Nau'ts'ity'I and I'tcts'ity'i, identify the "sisters," and "this world / and the four worlds below" further describes "the Universe." Without the modifiers, the austere "She thought of her sisters . . . and together they created the Universe," fails to locate the opening of that Universe at Laguna. The information these modifiers provide is actually crucial to placing the story on Laguna land, a point made clearer in the use of the conjunction "and" at the beginning of the last line. "This world," that usage suggests, does not exist apart from "the four worlds below"; they are conjoined from the beginning both of time and of the line.

In the final stanza of the story-poem, Silko reveals the poem as creator of the narrative about to unfold. "I'm telling you the story / she is thinking" again relies on the overwhelming significance of the modifying phrase for its import. Because it is separated by the silence, the blank space at the end of the line, "she is thinking" assumes such tremendous importance on a line of its own that we may forget that it actually modifies "story." As an independent clause that uses the present progressive, "she is thinking" serves as a reminder that Thought-Woman is always in the act of creating the world opening up before us. As a modifier, "she is thinking" underscores the simultaneity of the many stories contained in the novel with the "telling" itself, a point that becomes exceedingly important for the material forms through which the Laguna veterans listen to popular music.

Indeed, in keeping with its function as the initial reference for landmarks in later story-poems and for listening itself, the shifts in tense throughout the Thought-Woman piece draw attention to the temporal slippage in acts of creation. In the seventeen brief lines that comprise this story-poem, time circles from present progressive ("is sitting") in

the first stanza to past tense in the second and third stanzas, back to present progressive in the last two stanzas. The return to the initial tense first appears in a repetition of the story-poem's second line: "She is sitting in her room / thinking of a story now" (1). Appearing, as the line does, after the pastness of creation, this repetition serves to affirm the presence—both temporal and physical—of Creation in every storytelling performance.

Perhaps most indicative of the simultaneity of storytelling with its subject, the story-poem of the Scalp Society relies on the techniques evolved/created in the initial story of Thought-Woman. The story appears during a scene in which Tayo is visited by Old Ku'oosh in an attempted turn to traditional medicine in order to assuage Tayo's psychological dis-ease, an effect of his traumatic experiences in the Pacific theater. Seeing his uncle's face in the face of a dead Japanese soldier, struggling against the rain that is decaying his dying cousin's body, and, finally, cursing that unceasing jungle rain, continually recur in Tayo's memory, haunting the drought-ridden reservation of his post-war present. Without fully realizing the effects of his statement, Old Ku'oosh explains to Tayo that his health, like that of the other veterans, is necessary for the survival of the whole community: "It is important to all of us. Not only for your sake, but for this fragile world" (33). After the story-poem, though, we learn from Old Ku'oosh that some of the other veterans, who have already "had the Scalp Ceremony . . . are not better either." Though the story's lineation as a poem renders the speaker ambiguous, its poetic layout reveals some of the reasons why the Scalp Ceremony may not have worked "since the white people came" (35).

As with the Thought-Woman story-poem, the revelations are made through Silko's idiosyncratic use of modifiers. The first three lines initiate the storytelling performance colloquially with the words, "The way / I heard it / was." The colloquialism creates ambiguity from the very first line, wherein "the way" could be a path, but it could

also be a mode. We only get clarification when the colloquialism continues on the next line, a clarification that essentially translates to "a mode of listening." Silko thus sets up the storytelling performance as an event constituted by listening to an act of listening, but one construed in the past tense, as indicated on the third line ("was") and reinforced in the next two lines, "in the old days / long time ago." The temporal movement of these first lines within the context of the storytelling performance forms an iterative and self-reflexive structure of listening heightened by the accumulation of modifying phrases that end the first stanza:

they had this
Scalp Society
for warriors
who killed
or touched
dead enemies. (34)

The last four lines, which cumulatively describe the Scalp Society, not only provide information to the listener about the Scalp Society but also about the storyteller's mode of listening, the form of the listening event.

That form and the story-poem's self-reflexivity further obtain, ironically, in the lineation, that is, in the story-poem's strictly textual rather than aural performance. Thus, the articulation of an apparently possessive usage—"they had," suggesting ownership—to the active modifying phrase—"they must do"—recurs throughout the second stanza and encapsulates the form the politics of listening will take throughout the novel. In order to glean the articulation of formal to political duality in this story-poem, I reprint the stanza in full:

They had things
they must do
otherwise
K'oo'ko would haunt their dreams
with her great fangs and
everything would be endangered.
Maybe the rain wouldn't come
or the deer would go away.
That's why
they had things
they must do
The flute and dancing
blue cornmeal and
hair-washing. (34)

The peculiar phrasing, "they had things / they must do," capitalizes on the pause between the lines to present a dual structure in the form of decision. Before the pause, it would appear as though the warriors possessed material objects, one meaning of "they had things." The next line, containing the modifier "they must do," indicates that the warriors did not possess material objects; rather, "things" are inseparable from the ritual acts "they" must perform. To believe that the warriors "had things" in a material sense apart from the ceremonies is to commit a grave error precisely because the very idea of material possession is predicated on a separation, albeit one formed by the enjambed line.

The enjambed line thus borders the twin ideas of property and ceremony, suggesting at once a prior connection and an imposed structure of separation. When the

Scalp Society story-poem ends with, "All these things / they had to do," the storyteller reveals that what was being separated was not "things" from its modifier, "they had to do." Rather, the separation occurs in the second stanza between the idea of possessions, what "they had," and the idea of ritually ordained action, what "they must do." The final stanza unites the two in the last line, emphasizing that material objects do not exist independently of the ceremonies. In keeping with the event structure with which the poem opens, this lesson informs *Ceremony*'s politics of listening through a poetics of enjambment. In other words, the combination of "the way I heard it" with the deliberate use of enjambment begs the question as to how the returned warriors heard their own scalp ceremonies. The decision to listen for the separation between having and doing provides one reason why some of the other veterans have not gotten better even after the Scalp Ceremony. For Harley, Pinkie, Leroy, and Emo have a first-hand knowledge that "things" do exist outside of the ceremony. And they are there, in the white world, for the taking, but only to the extent that the veterans can be the "same" as white people.

Emo, like the other veterans, has an acute awareness of the distance between the logic of white, American ownership and participating in tribally-sanctioned ceremonial rituals, which, particularly for the Pueblos so close to Route 66, risk falling prey to commodification. Unlike the other veterans, however, particularly Harley and Tayo, Emo further separates the two worlds by resorting to anger and resentment. Thus, instead of being anomalous, as it seems on first reading, Emo's bar story about "grabbin white pussy" actually relies upon the mythical and ceremonial qualities of the story-poems even as it offers an alternative to their healing function, since it best captures the seductiveness of warriors possessing "things." Again, the speaker uses demonstrative pronouns—"these two white women," "this other one," "those girls"—to precede the objects of desire (53). Aligning the parts of speech from the Scalp Society story-poem with those from Emo's

bar story reveals that the white women represent for Emo the "things" that soldiers have in contrast to what the Pueblos have lost. In the moments preceding his story-poem, for instance, Emo complains, "They took our land, they took everything! So let's get our hands on white women!" For Emo, the drought-ridden reservation land to which the veterans had returned is a constant reminder of how little Indians have in relation to whites. He sermonizes to the choir of veterans, "But they've got *everything*. And we don't get shit, do we?" (51). By objectifying white women and then articulating his craven desire for them as objects, Emo indicates his wholesale consumption of the ideology of American commodity culture, an ideology, according to the logic of the story-poems, premised on the separation between "they had things" and "they must do."

Underscored on multiple levels by Emo's prized collection of dead Japanese soldiers' teeth, that consumption with and of objects situates Emo and his story in Betonie's story of the witchery. The Diné healer Betonie tells Tayo of a witch's collective, a "conference," where witches from all tribes, male and female, come together for "a contest / the way people have baseball tournaments nowadays" (123). When all the witches had exalted their gifts in this macabre match, they realized there was one witch who had remained quiet the entire time. When prompted, this witch

> didn't show off any dark thunder charcoals
>
> or red ant-hill beads.
>
> This one just told them to listen:
>
> "What I have is a story." (124)

As in the Scalp Society story-poem, the witch's speech relies on a peculiar colloquialism that privileges possession ("what I have is"). Whereas throughout the story of the witchery thus far, the language of the contest has been one of "showing off," this witch

prepares not to display, but to give what s/he possesses through telling. As opposed to the instantiation of a structure of listening that opens the Scalp Society story-poem, this witch positions her/his storytelling performance in an imperative to listen, thereby distancing him/herself from the audience.[28] That distance, which constitutes the form of the storytelling event here, is replicated in the story itself, "*Set in motion now* / *set in motion by our witchery* / *to work for us*" (125).

The story the witch tells self-referentially possesses life, as it is about the possession of life and its objectification by white commodity culture. The "white skin people" that this unknown witch creates in the story may not be inherently dangerous. What *is* dangerous, as Joseph Bauerkemper points out, is their worldview, premised on the objectification (and, therefore, death) of the earth and its inhabitants. Bauerkemper thus contends:

> The gruesome consequences that unfold in the story are not due to the *existence* of humans with pale skin; they are due to the *progressive history* of Euroamerican civilization that unfolds after this key line break [between stanzas four and five]. These consequences result because of movement "away from the earth" and the eventual objectification and exploitation that accompanies such a move. (40)

I would go beyond Bauerkemper's argument to suggest that the break in the line reveals that the death and destruction that the story "sets in motion" is actually heralded by the very possibility of a line break, a possibility underscored by the distance implicit in the imperative to listen. Nevertheless, Bauerkemper's central argument stands. The movement of the white-skinned people from "caves of dark hills" to a "grow[th] away from the earth" constitutes a move into the kind of linear, progressive history on which

[28] As I explore in greater detail in chapter three, the imperative to listen heightens the awareness of a distance between the speaker and the implied you of the subject. At the same time, it subjects the "you" to the speaker's episteme of listening, which implies suspending one's own subjectivity in an attempt to bridge that difference. The imperative to listen, that is, always means "listen to me the way I want you to listen to me" or "listen to me selflessly."

imperialism, the rise of the modern nation-state, and the logic of global capitalism are founded. The play of possession, then, both in the Scalp Society story-poem and in Betonie's story-poem of the witchery, invite questions of the relationships between power, ownership, and listening.[29]

While for the witchery, that is, distance and disinterest make ownership possible, including ownership of the past, the Scalp Society story-poem suggests that ownership cannot be effectively separated from action. The coexistence of these two epistemological frameworks creates a competition in the novel that informs its politics of listening. Following the textual cues that Silko offers in her poetics of enjambment leads to an evocation of the characters' listening practices, which depend not just on consuming or possessing sound but also on appropriating the material conditions of sonic (re)production in order to effect social and spatial transformation. For this reason, not only who tells the stories or who sings the songs but also the material forms through which they are told and sung become exceedingly important for discerning which epistemologies are privileged in the characters' various listening practices.

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[29] Since in this chapter I mobilize a Marxist discourse about the relations of power to material conditions of (sonic) production and reproduction and, at the same time, since those relationships are produced within a tribal-national context, I want to distinguish between my own understanding of the contemporary tribal nation and Marx's developmental theory of forms of ownership, which begins with the tribal. For Marx, the tribal form of ownership "corresponds to the undeveloped stage of production, at which a people lives by hunting and fishing, by the rearing of beasts or, in the highest stage, agriculture. . . . The social structure is, therefore, limited to an extension of the family" (151). In *Ceremony*, however, tribal political, ceremonial, and cultural structures continue to persist alongside the entry of, first, Spanish colonial relations, and then the emergent market capitalist economies of Mexican and Euro-American immigrants. Though I rarely use it, privileging instead, Indigenous, Native, or tribally specific terms such as Laguna Pueblo or Diné, "tribal," as I understand its usage signifies the endurance of Indigenous forms of cultural production and expression rather than an original stage of economic development to be overturned by communal, feudal, and eventually capitalist forms. In the sense that "tribal" is already a form of the national, it also denatures the claim that nationalisms follow the course of economic development that Marx establishes and on which, for instance, Benedict Anderson's (1983/1991) arguments rely. For an expanded discussion of the ways in which the material conditions of production shifted from the Spanish to the Mexican and U.S. occupations of the Native lands among the Pueblos, see Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz's *Roots of Resistance: A History of Land Tenure in New Mexico* (2007).

Though Betonie already inscribes the work of death into his particular version of commodification in the story of the witchery, as Tayo's understanding encompasses a fuller conception of the witchery's impact on Laguna and on his own health, he begins to recognize that fatal impulse in the objects the veterans possess: Emo's bag of teeth, Leroy's truck. "White people selling Indians junk cars and trucks," the narrator intimates, "reminded Tayo of the Army captain in the 1860s who made a gift of wool blankets to the Apaches: the entire stack of blankets was infected with smallpox" (146). The truck, with a drunk Leroy at the wheel and Harley in the passenger seat, ultimately serves as the literal vehicle for the two veterans' deaths: "The old GMC pickup was crushed around them like the shiny metal coffin the Veterans Office bought for each of them. In that way it was not much different than if they had died at Wake Island or Iwo Jima" (240).

The "not much different than" reminds readers of the lie of "sameness" that Tayo grasps as he attempts to enter the veterans' ceremony by telling his own bar story. Sitting in a smoky bar, the Dixie Tavern, on Route 66 just outside the Laguna Pueblo Reservation limits, Tayo begins, at his friends' behest: "One time, there were these Indians, see. They were MacArthur's boys; white whores took their money same as anyone. These Indians got treated the same as anyone: Wake Island, Iwo Jima. They got the same medals for bravery, the same flag over the coffin" (38). Tayo's insistence on the sameness of the Indian veterans' experience explicitly names the desire implicit in the stories Harley, Pinkie, Leroy, and Emo tell, a desire to be treated like white men, white war veterans, with the same opportunities, the same humanity.

But Tayo articulates the tragic reality of that desire, which is that it will remain unrequited:

> First time you walked down the street in Gallup or Albuquerque, you knew. Don't lie. You knew right away. The war was over, the uniform was gone. All of a

> sudden that man at the store waits on you last, makes you wait until all the white people bought what they wanted. And the white lady at the bus depot, she's real careful now not to touch your hand when she counts out your change. You watch it slide across the counter at you, and you know. Goddamn it! You stupid sonofabitches! You know! (39)

Tayo spews forth a fury and anger that disturbs the drunken solemnity of the veterans' nostalgic ceremony. His anger and volume lead the bartender over to the veterans' table, but as the other vets dismiss him with a pacific word, "the jukebox lit up, and Hank Williams started singing. Tayo got quiet" (39). Hank Williams' song on the jukebox, selected by an unnamed patron or perhaps the bartender himself, fills the silent space in which Tayo's voice, Tayo's story, is violently disrupted.

The danger in Tayo's story for the veterans emerges not from his anger; rather, what Harley perceives when he tells Mannie to plug in the jukebox is the story's potential to obviate the addiction, to call out the lie of the ritual: that its "medicine" is poison. The lie of the ritual reiterates the lie of sameness implicit in Tayo's disrupted story. The deception of the both is that on which the ideology of assimilation is founded: with private property, you belong to America and its ideals. "Belonging," Tayo recognizes, "was drinking and laughing with the platoon, dancing with blond women, buying drinks for buddies born in Cleveland, Ohio" (39). For the veterans it is the longing to belong that stimulates both the pain and the cure. In its insistence on the repetition of loss, the lie of the ritual also recurs in Hank Williams' songs.

II. Jukebox Enjambment and the Lie of Assimilation

When Tayo's anger threatens to erupt as he tells his story at the Dixie Tavern, Harley senses what is coming. Even before the bartender can come over to their table, Harley yells across the bar, "Hey, Mannie! . . . Plug in the juke box for us!" (38). Harley's experiences with both Tayo's anger and the pacifying power of Hank Williams

playing on the jukebox lead him to assert what little control over the situation he can muster. Though his early awareness of the tension building in Tayo's story reveals Harley's disposition as a sensitive listener, his turn to the jukebox also underscores his desire to dull that sensitivity. Like his consumption of alcohol and his recourse to humor, Harley's jukebox playback of Hank Williams accentuates his internalization of a listening practice premised on displacing traumatic memory's encroachment on the present. He dulls his sensitivity to what he hears in the community by listening primarily to an object that renders listening as an individual act even in the public space of a bar. The surface materiality of the jukebox, its segmentation of musical options in the form of individual, cellular labels, obscures the jukebox's connection to a larger power source as evidenced in Harley's statement: "Plug in the juke box for us!" Though in this call, Harley implicitly demonstrates his knowledge of the jukebox's connection, his listening practice nevertheless renders it invisible.

Though the narrative does not suggest Harley selects it necessarily, the playing of the Hank Williams song in the Dixie Tavern demonstrates an acute awareness of the "medicinal" power of the country singer's particular sonic vocabulary to return "that old feeling." Silko here puts to narrative use words that hearken to the lyrics of Hank Williams' "I Can't Help It (If I'm Still in Love With You)" (1951) to describe the veterans' nostalgia for white American culture and consumption. Indeed, she casts it in a modifying clause as "that feeling they belonged to America the way they felt during the war" (39). Though a love song in which "that old-time feelin'" refers explicitly to belonging to/with a lover, "I Can't Help It" here sounds out of the page, insinuating itself into the narrator's description of the scene just as it serves to reinforce and authorize the veterans' donning a dialectic of shame/blame for the feeling's passing: "[T]hey blamed themselves for losing the new feeling . . . just like they blamed themselves for losing the

land the white people took" (39). More immediately, however, they blame Tayo for lifting the curtain of nostalgia that the jukebox drops again. Behind the curtain, the song itself makes clear the relation between the veterans' self-blame and the need to return that nostalgic feeling.

As the song's lyric sounds out of this scene, it draws attention to the psychological pain that the veterans' "ritual" storytelling inflicts, pain heightened by their compulsion to repeat it. "They repeated the stories about good times in Oakland and San Diego," the narrator explains, "repeated them like long medicine chants, the beer bottles pounding on the counter tops like drums" (39). The ritual storytelling reproduces and, therefore, makes present the sense of belonging that the veterans experienced as soldiers, as heroes. But in recreating that sense of belonging, they also implicitly recreate the loss of that "old time feeling," keeping it always painfully in mind. Thus, the ritual itself performs the formal movement of "I Can't Help It," which similarly indulges in a compulsion to repeat the moment of loss.

For that reason, "I Can't Help It" is one of Hank's most tragically lonesome songs. Both musically and lyrically, the song articulates a compulsion to return to the loss that constitutes painful memory. The first few chords of the song transfer its aching sorrow to the listener as the twanging guitar penetrates the ear sharply and painfully, heralding the physical pain of loss evoked in the lyrics. Those opening chords also sound out the melody of the repeated titular refrain: "I can't help it if I'm still in love with you." That line, repeated at the end of each verse, a total of four times, and reiterated by both the piercing guitar and melodic fiddle in the interlude, describes the kind of belonging on which longing alone encroaches. The past—a history of loss, suffering, and pain—conditions an always-becoming present in the recognition of the compulsion to return, underscored in the "I can't help it" clause, which both grammatically and sonically stands

alone. When Hank sings the repeated line his voice stretches to a higher pitch to sing the phrase "I can't help it," then reaches its lowest note in the refrain on the "if" to rise only very slightly as he croons, "I'm still in love with you." The latter half of the line never reaches the emotional pitch or intensity of the first half, suggesting that the inability to stop the memory from surfacing, the need to replay it, incites more pain than the feeling itself. Love, in other words, hurts less than its recurrence as loss, that which inhabits the memory and creates the pain of longing.

Though recurrence and reiteration form part of the narrative simultaneity of mythic and historical time, the jukebox's disruption of Tayo's story also places the machine's function in the realm of the witchery. If, as Louis Owens recognizes, "[s]eparating and dividing are tools of the witchery," the jukebox playback of Hank Williams punctuates the space of the bar with a ritualized separation (*Other Destinies* 189). The reiteration of the loss and pain that occurs musically, sonically, in "I Can't Help It" also recurs in the material form of the jukebox itself. Like the enjambed lines of the Scalp Society story-poem, the jukebox evidences a connection—the plug—that nevertheless separates it from a Laguna "power source." Also like the story-poems, the jukebox relies on its enjambed separations, exemplified this time in the layout of the song title and artist labels, to offer consumers a choice. Unlike the story-poems, however, the jukebox's offerings of choice tend to obscure the form of its separation, its division, rather than revealing it.

Indeed, Harley's selections index the divisive form of the jukebox in a later bar scene as well, this time at the Y Bar in Mesita, again just off Route 66. When he follows Harley, Leroy, and Helen Jean into the bar, Tayo hears and observes "the jukebox . . . playing a Mexican polka and Harley . . . dancing around by himself. There were some Mexicans from the section gang drinking beer at a table in the corner and three Navajos

slouching on stools on the bar." Harley alters the sonic atmosphere, precipitating the Mexicanos' departure, when he "gets up again, order[s] a round of Coors, feed[s] quarters into the juke box . . . [and] punche[s] the buttons for all the Hank Williams songs" (148). That Harley "danc[es] around by himself" to the polka might suggest his own affinity for the Mexican norteño tradition, which actually informs country and western musical development, but in light of his flooding the bar with Hank Williams' bluesy songs and the air of hilarity that predominates the affective environment of the scene, his dancing reveals his internalization of a far more complex logic than musical taste can describe.

Harley's dancing, that is, suggests that his emotional response to the post-traumatic stress of the war, the loss of a sense of American belonging and his friends' in-fighting, occurs as a counterpoint to Tayo and Emo's anger and violence; Harley's medicine is in humor. The vet's "dancing around by himself" to the polka furthers the alcohol-induced "happiness" that results from his embrace of precisely such medicinal laughter. When, for instance, he tries to persuade Tayo to ride a mule "up the line" to one of the bars on Route 66, Harley jokes that perhaps the two might set "some kind of world's record—you know, longest donkey ride ever made for a cold beer or something like that. An Indian world's record." It works. For Tayo recognizes that "when Harley talked like that, things that had happened, the dead sheep, the bar fight [with Emo], even jail—all seemed very remote" (22). Though, from Tayo's perspective, it seems as though Harley pushes the material consequences of the veterans' post-war sickness into a nebulous past, Harley's humor actually brings that past to bear on the present. Affirming Vine Deloria, Jr.'s theory of Indian humor as a mechanism of survival and community-building, he deliberately displaces past intra-tribal conflicts and violence in order to avoid further conflict with his friend in the present moment.

Prior to entering the Y Bar, Harley introduces mockery into his comedic repertoire. When Leroy and Harley stop to pick Tayo up on their way down Route 66 toward Mesita, Tayo meets Helen Jean, a young Ute woman Harley and Leroy had met in Gallup the previous night. When they all arrive at the Y Bar and begin clambering out of the truck, Helen Jean's purse falls and, as the men help her retrieve its contents, "Harley grabbed the mirror out of her hand and pranced around one of the elm trees, pretending to be 'chickish muggy,' someone who swished around, exercising his back muscles as he walked" (147-48). Harley's gender-bending performance certainly serves to diminish, through laughter, the sexual tension arising from the men competing for Helen Jean's attention, but it also reinforces that tension and competition through reference to its absence. Harley's dancing around inside the bar performs a similar dialectic. Still in the mode of mockery, Harley's polka performance enacts a kind of solidarity with the Mexican section gang workers that dissembles its identificatory content, a fiction made all the more apparent by his subsequent displacement of the polka with "all of the Hank Williams songs."

Harley's use of humor thus betrays his internalization of the logic of the belonging-longing dialectic that organizes "I Can't Help It,"—an internalization that underscores his disposition as a listener—but it also demonstrates an awareness of the social and cultural contours of that dialectic. What Harley seeks in playing the Hank Williams songs and in using them to displace the alterity of the Mexican polka is to consume the kind of palatable difference that would mark the Laguna veteran as assimilable; in fact, he seeks a similitude that would allow him to belong to a specifically U.S. national narrative. He desires to be, like the jukebox on which he plays the songs, "plugged in" to a power source of privileged sameness, without recognizing that that

desire remains unfulfilled precisely because he is as separated from whiteness as the Mexican polka song is separated from Hank Williams'.

Ironically, then, Harley's dancing tacitly reveals a similarity between himself and the Mexicanos on the one hand and between the Mexican polka and Hank Williams' songs on the other, but only through his deliberate refusal to listen to the resonances between them. In this respect, it is important to note that Harley's contestatory playing of the song on the divisive material form of the jukebox, rather than the country songs themselves, constitutes the desire for assimilability.[30] In fact, both the norteño and classic country music traditions share a sonic expression of disaffection and disillusionment vis-à-vis their respective national norms.[31] Both, for instance, rely on a sobbing tonality among their predominantly masculine singing personae; both incorporate relatively simple musical backdrops to draw greater attention to the lyrical content; and in both, loss dominates the lyrical thematic. Both traditions, in other words, celebrate alienation and loneliness as a rejection and critique of the social and political norms that have created the conditions for their singing subjects' marginality. Yet, as he plays over the

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[30] In fact, Hank Williams continues to find purchase in Indian Country as indicated in Sherman Alexie's treatment of him in *Reservation Blues*, when Samuel Builds-the-Fire yells out in Thomas's memory, "*Hank Williams is a goddamned Spokane Indian!*" (91). But he resounds elsewhere, too. Craig Womack, for instance, tells of a night drive with friends when he popped a Hank Williams tape into the car radio and they began "Howling at the Moon." "I don't know quite how to put my finger on it," he writes, "but it has to do with alienation, loneliness, a shitload of pain, and not being able to speak with the one you love, remaining hidden and silent in the shadows for a lifetime. The songs have everything to do with being queer; the songs have everything to do with being Indian" ("Howling" 38). What Womack hears in Hank Williams resonates with Harley's disidentification of the heteronormative competition for Helen Jean through queer performance as well as his disidentification with the economic competition between himself and the Mexican chain gang. Indeed, in many ways—including his listening to Hank Williams—Harley queers Lagunidad. His most fulfilling relationships, for instance, are homo-social, and while he enjoys listening to the other veterans tell their stories of womanizing, he never volunteers his own. Finally, given the evidence for his strategies of listening for survival and his capacity for using humor to simultaneously recognize and displace "desperate" situations, his death is far from pre-determined in the novel. A queer reading might suggest that his death scene—with Leroy in the GMC pickup truck—is made possible by the multiple forms of heteronormative silencing at work in the novel.

[31] For an extensive discussion of the former, see Ragland's *Música Norteña* (2009), for the latter see Ching's *Wrong's What I Do Best* (2001).

polka with Hank Williams, Harley apprehends that Williams retains the privilege of disaffection in a U.S. context because of his racial potential: as a young white musician, he is poised to enter the narrative of success that characterizes the American Dream. His refusal to disavow his Southern heritage and lifestyle, a decision that inspires much of the bitter loneliness of his songs, only marks his privilege further; that he can slip easily into white middle-class society is only further reinforced by the fact that he elects not to.[32] Harley's bluesy humor reveals the opposite for him: his mocking dance performance signifies an all-too-close racial alignment with the Mexican section gang workers, an alignment that forecloses on the possibility of a privileged belonging to a dominant national citizenry.

Because of its guiding logic of disidentification, Harley's mockery at once registers and displaces those resonances between the Mexicanos, Indians, and cowboys implicitly or explicitly represented in this scene.[33] Harley's comedic dancing relies on a repressive play of competition. Concealing the social equivalence and, therefore, competition between himself and the Mexicanos serves, as with the gender-crossing

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[32] This "election" also calls attention to the racial politics of southern music specifically and, eventually, rock & roll more broadly. Hank Williams famously learned how to play guitar from a Black man in Montgomery, Alabama named Rufus Payne, known to Hank as Tee-Tot. Though Williams purchased lessons, remarking, "I'd give him fifteen cents or whatever I could get a hold of," Payne's place in musical history is forever in Hank's shadow (Cooper 17). He remains, to riff on Toni Morrison, eternally "playing in the dark" and, moreover, in silence, each chord ventriloquized by every playback of Hank Williams.

[33] My use of the term disidentification has been heavily influenced by José Esteban Muñoz's theorization of queer survival strategies. He defines disidentification as "a strategy that works on and against dominant ideology" (*Disidentifications* 11). As a practice and a process, he says, it "is meant to be descriptive of the survival strategies the minority subject practices in order to negotiate a phobic majoritarian public sphere that continuously elides or punishes the existence of subjects who do not conform to the phantasm of normative citizenship" (4). In other words, it is a queering of dominative cultural practices and productions. Rather than pushing the incorporated other out, minority subjects find themselves with the desire to identify with cultural objects and ideologies or representations/embodiments thereof at the same time that they oppose majoritarian response to those same cultural productions. As I use the terms "disidentification" and "disidentificatory" throughout this dissertation, I do not intend to universalize the queer singularity with which Muñoz charges the term. Instead, I hope to demonstrate the resemblances and resonances between queer survival strategies and those of people of color regardless of gender or sexual orientation.

performance, to further reveal or re-present it. Competition, that is, underwrites the (dis)identificatory mockery that forms its discursive vehicle. Adding insult to injury, Harley further stimulates the competitive energy initiated in his mocking dance number when he plays the Hank Williams songs. Hearing the competition behind his own performance, Harley thus creates in the bar a listening public to hear it along with him. Misery, in this case, truly does love company.

In its connection to a distant power source as well as its separation of musical traditions in the layout of song selections, the jukebox represents a mode of decision-making complicit with a model of capitalist development that privileges competition and hierarchization. Harley's song choices on the jukebox, which lead up to and, perhaps, compel the displacement of the Mexican section gang workers, situate his listening practice within the logic of economic development that reinforces such competition. The jukebox defines that listening practice through the delimitation of choice. Inasmuch as they present themselves as discrete, purchasable objects, the song titles and artists printed on the jukebox's panel (dis)simulate. When Harley stands before the jukebox, taking in the limited options before him, his decision hinges on the song titles and artists as representations of individual identities in competition with each other. They thus offer a semblance of choice that empowers Harley as the consumer at the same time as they conscript him—and his quarters—into a political economy of separation that demands hierarchization and individuation for the possibility of selection. When the Hank Williams songs begin playing at the Y Bar, they dominate the space, encoding an implicit statement of belonging and exclusion founded on competition for limited resources. The "resource" in this case, is Helen Jean, whose proficiency in the Indian bar scene is suggested when she excuses herself to follow the recently-paid Mexican workers out the door.

Indeed, the material form of the jukebox itself seems to prohibit Harley from recognizing the political potential of the shared space of the Mexican and U.S. southern musical forms, space shared and contested physically as well as sonically in the context of a highway, Route 66, that relies on selling a narrative of Indians and Mexicans "tamed" by cowboys. The materiality of the jukebox along with Harley's particular performance of listening intercedes in and delimits the kind of healing movement across boundaries that Silko will open up over the course of the ceremony. For Silko, what Owens defines as the "centripetal" movement that parallels the centripetal motion of Betonie's sand painting, relies on an understanding of borders as transitions rather than strict dividing lines. The jukebox's distancing of norteño from country, of the Mexican polka from Hank Williams, as well as its reliance upon the distance between "plug" and power source, thus locates it within the witchery and as a counter to Betonie's sand painting (172). Where one heals through a centripetal movement, the other separates through materializing distance.

Betonie teaches Tayo, however, that "an ear for the story, an eye for the pattern" can re-integrate what the witchery separates such that even machines become instrumental rather than mechanical (236). Betonie thus incorporates changes into the ceremonies through technologies like calendars, which themselves re-present the Santa Fe railroad's commodity representations of Southwestern Indigenous practice. Not only does Betonie's hogan overlook the tourist-driven Gallup ceremonial grounds (also on Route 66), through his ceremonial use of the calendars he actively manipulates the linear temporal movement through which Route 66 came to displace the railroads. According to Peter Dedek,

> Route 66's path to fame began in the late nineteenth century with the advertising campaigns of the Atchison, Topeka, & Santa Fe (AT&SF) and the Southern

> Pacific Railroads . . . The railroads and the Fred Harvey Company, which managed hotels for the AT&SF [and later opened motels along Route 66], aggressively marketed the Southwest, mostly using the Pueblo Indians and the myth of the Old West to entice potential tourists from the East . . . (3)

The AT&SF rail line's marketing depended primarily on the circulation of calendars featuring preservationist paintings of the Southwest and Indian ceremonies.

Betonie harnesses the power of those calendars to denaturalize both their advertising and time-keeping functions. The calendars form Tayo's entry into the ceremony that Betonie will conduct: "Tayo studied the pictures and names on the calendars. . . . in recent years the old man had favored Santa Fe railroad calendars that had Indian scenes painted on them—Navajos herding sheep, deer dancers at Cochiti, and little Pueblo children chasing burros" (111). The images serve as (re)productive mnemonics that allow Tayo to tell the healer of his uncle Josiah, of his fears about the Mexican woman Night Swan, of the Mexican cattle that will define the ceremonial quest, and of his war experiences. Betonie clearly apprehends a connection between the stereotyped calendars and the stereotypes in neon and adobe that run along Route 66 in the transformation from railroad images to tourist stops. He changes the tenor of the images, however, by parodying the commodification of Native life and ceremonies for the purposes of maintaining Native life and ceremonial practice.

III. SIMULTANEITY IN THE GROOVES

Harley's jukebox listening indicates that the material form of sound reproduction technologies exists in a mutually transformative relationship with his particular disposition as a listener, a relationship that both affects and effects what he actually hears in the songs. The same applies for Tayo's cultivation of an "ear for the story" in his encounter with the Mexican migrant dancer, Night Swan, an encounter prefaced first by his awareness of her alienness as figured in her Mexicanidad and, more immediately, by

his hearing "[a] scratchy Victrola . . . playing guitars and trumpets; a man s[inging] sad Spanish words. '*Y volveré*' were the only words Tayo could understand" (20). Although the words "y volveré" could refer to the popular bolero romántico that put internationally renowned Chilean band Los Angeles Negros on the map in 1971, Silko draws attention away from both the song and the lyrics to highlight the Victrola's reliance on the centripetal movement of the stylus across the disc. In contradistinction to the political economy of separation and commodity similitude figured in the jukebox, Night Swan manipulates the Victrola and "Y Volveré" such that they serve Tayo's, and Laguna's, ceremony.

The song's efficacy for the ceremony also relies on a temporal movement that defies the linear progression of history that Bauerkemper associates with the witchery. In order to fully recognize this movement, we must first observe Tayo's listening practice, a practice that hears the resonances between Night Swan's prophetic musical moment and her Mexicanidad.[34] By the time Tayo, Harley, Leroy, and Helen Jean arrive at the Y Bar and encounter the Mexican section gang workers, Tayo has already encountered discursive Mexicanidad in his work with his uncle Josiah and the Mexican cattle, in his Aunt's characterizations of Night Swan, and in Betonie's stories of his grandmother, "a remarkable Mexican with green eyes" (109). Over the course of the narrative, Mexicanidad becomes increasingly more unstable for Tayo, no longer a source of shame or blame and, therefore, no longer viewed, as with Harley's transformation of the acoustic space of the Y Bar, as competition.

[34] In my usage, Mexicanidad, or Mexicanness, describes the discursive representations to which Mexican people are subject. Neither essential nor intrinsic, I contend, Mexicanidad defines the cultural phenomena emergent from Mexico as a homeland, a republic, or a nation. But Mexicanidad also represents the ways in which those nationalist expressions and cultural practices are subject to interpretation by outside nations, particularly the U.S. I develop these ideas further in chapter two.

Associations of Mexicanidad with alienness, strangeness, and shame obtain and transform in the figure of Night Swan. A migrant flamenco dancer who exudes sensuality, Night Swan keeps mostly to herself. The People at Laguna know her as the mysterious Mexicana who lives above Lalo's store in Cubero, a town populated in the narrative by ranching and working-class Mexicans. As she enters into a relationship with Tayo's uncle, Josiah, she tells him more of her story, a story intimately related to her power. The narrator reveals the relationship in the transition into Night Swan's memory with the line in which she also names herself: "'They called me Night Swan,' she said. 'I remember every time I have danced.'" These words announce the narrative shift to Night Swan's perspective, as the narrator continues, "If she had not been so young she would have realized that [the unnamed married lover of her youth] was nothing, that the power she was feeling had always been inside her, growing, pushing to the surface, only its season coinciding with her new lover" (78). After this early lover leaves her, preferring, in her words, "the lie" that conceals her power beneath a series of misogynistic epithets—"Whore! Witch!"—she learns to translate that power into dance (79). Nevertheless, the power that originally attracted her lover remains into the narrative present (the time in which she tells Josiah this story), cultivating the suspicions of those in the towns to and from which she has migrated: Las Cruces, El Paso, Socorro, Cubero.

When she moves to Cubero to "retire" in the room above Lalo's store, the People immediately sense the threat that she poses. Already a stranger to the community, she is further marked by a mysterious sensuality that can only mean that she carries the shame of the fallen woman. As if guessing her history, "the women watched the bright blue door on the second-story porch, and they imagined unspeakable scenes between the Night Swan and their husbands or sons." When Josiah embarks on his relationship with her, one marked by a relative calm compared to the turbulent affair that revealed her power, "the

Cubero women relaxed." As a "dancer with eyes like a cat" but also as simply a powerful Mexicana, Night Swan draws the ire of a community that flattens her into the twin codes entailed in the epithets her one-time lover hurled at her: whore, witch (81).

At home, though, Josiah's affair with Night Swan causes other kinds of turbulence. His sister Thelma decries the shame that Josiah brings on their family in his affair with a Mexican woman. Her perception of Night Swan is tainted by the family's loss of Tayo's mother Laura to the alien seduction of Mexican and white men. Echoing Old Ku'oosh's admonition to Tayo, the narrator says of Laura, "the feelings of shame, at her own people and at the white people, grew inside her, side by side like monstrous twins that would have to be left in the hills to die. The people wanted her back . . . what happened to the girl did not happen to her alone, it happened to all of them" (63). Josiah's affair scandalizes Auntie and Old Grandma because it brings back that old shame. Auntie goes so far as to equate the actions of her two siblings: "It will start all over again," she laments. "All that gossip about Josiah and about Little Sister. Girls around here have babies by white men all the time now, and nobody says anything. Men run around with Mexicans and even worse, and nothing is ever said. But just let it happen with our family—" (30-31). Here the term "Mexican" and the specific individual, Night Swan, that it describes, represents all of the shame that appears to follow from allowing "alien" or outside forces in.

Thelma erects a wall around her family to protect them from the kind of loss, separation, and alienation that her sister's promiscuity bred. To penetrate that wall, to open oneself and one's family up to the possibility of separation again, also exposes the family to the internalization of that alienation, to shame. In his exploration of Native experience as a guiding theoretical paradigm for the scholarly critique of what he labels Red Power literatures, Cherokee scholar Sean Teuton identifies shame as a pre-

theoretical affective response to socially and politically mediated experiences. Anger, he says, "is not only a more productive explanation of events, but also more socially enabling than that of shame" (127). Anger enables concrete identification of the structural and systemic modes of oppression operating in a particular, local expression of shame. But Auntie's anger at, or more precisely, resentment of Night Swan appears to be directed toward her Mexicanidad. Tayo thus hears and understands in Auntie's references to Night Swan's Mexicanidad the implicit shame of Josiah's opening himself, and, therefore, the family and community that he is supposed to protect, to an outsider.

However, Tayo also hears that shame in reference to himself. Though his paternity is uncertain throughout, Tayo, in keeping with what he hears in Auntie's voice, aligns his own mixed-bloodedness with Mexican mestizaje. Both the Mexican-as-mestiza/o and Tayo-as-mixed-blood represent an implicit promiscuity embodied in the physical incorporation of otherness—an incorporation that feels like a separation. Thus, Tayo, who "*had learned to listen* to the undertones of [Auntie's] voice" and could hear "like fingernails scratching against bare rock, her terror at being trapped in one of the oldest ways," understands that his own sense of shame, his own longing, is intimately tied to his ability to re-incorporate his name and that of his mother back into the destiny of the People (62, emphasis added). He understands that the careful distance Auntie keeps between himself and his cousin Rocky is a part of the People's separation "from themselves," and thus a function of the witchery.

Though alterity seems to inspire the fear, shame, and anger that Tayo hears, the narrator suggests that its roots lie in a more historically specific and politicized matrix: colonial discourse. The narrator explains, "An old sensitivity had descended in [Auntie], surviving thousands of years from the oldest times, when the people shared a single clan name and they told each other who they were . . . the people shared the same

consciousness" (62). Upon the arrival of "European names," lines become blurred, but "the sensitivity remained: the ability to feel what the others were feeling in the belly and chest" (63). Palimpsestic in nature, colonial discourse denies shared consciousness, the collective self-determination of Indian communities, in order to legitimize the super-imposition of the imported language, a language that at once reflects and reifies the political economy of subjugation on which the colonial order is founded. The separation that generates Auntie's shame, then, indicates how she listens for, in accordance with the witchery, a separation of language from feeling in the stories the People tell (about) themselves.

When Josiah sends the young, pre-war Tayo to Night Swan's apartment with his note of apology for missing their scheduled rendezvous because of the rain, Tayo's listening disposition, his ability to internalize meaning through the feelings that listening provokes, comes to bear on his first hearing of "Y Volveré." As he approaches Night Swan's apartment, for instance, "He walked up the spiral staircase slowly, smelling wet adobe plaster and listening to the rain rattle the waxy green cottonwood leaves growing near the porch. A scratchy Victrola was playing guitars and trumpets; a man sang sad Spanish words" (90). When Night Swan invites him in, Tayo recognizes that

> The music came from behind the curtain . . . the songs were soft and slow, without voices. . . . He could feel something back there, something of her life which he could not explain. The room pulsed with feeling, the feeling flowing with the music and the breeze from the curtains, feeling colored by the blue flowers painted in a border around the walls. He could feel it everywhere, even in the blue sheets that were stretched tightly across the bed. Somewhere, from another room, he heard a clock ticking slowly and distinctly, as if the years, the centuries were lost in that sound. (90-91)

And they are. Tayo's sensitivity to the mystery of Night Swan's apartment is intimately bound up with the sonic reshaping of temporality made possible by the Victrola.

Narratively, this scene unites memory (past) with prophecy (future) such that the song playing becomes a creative moment akin to Thought-Woman's thinking of the story. As such it impels Tayo's recognition of Night Swan's significance for the ceremony. Night Swan herself is described as outside of time and the processes of aging. Tayo notices that "her long brown hair was curled and piled on her head in long ringlets, the style of some past time. She did not look old or young to him then; she was like the rain and the wind; age had no relation to her" (91). Moreover, the scene occurs in a flashback as Tayo sits, frustrated, in a bar with Harley (the bar, in fact, to which they had ridden the mules). The flashback also recalls the dream that opens the novel, when Tayo hears the words "y volveré" over and over again before the dream turns into nightmarish Japanese screams and a radiating jukebox (5). In this collapsing of narrative time, Silko offers to Night Swan the ceremonial privilege of simultaneity; Night Swan's ceremonial role frames all times as moments of creation, as transitions. Finally, the temporal movement in this moment assumes a pivotal (or, more properly, centripetal) importance for Tayo as he recalls Night Swan's parting imperative and foretelling: ". . . remember this day. You will recognize it later. You are part of it now" (92).

Though Night Swan's prophetic comment dispels Tayo's discomfort and uncertainty about the "alien" feeling emanating from her room, he recognizes that alienness itself centers on him. After they make love, Night Swan admits to Tayo that she had been watching him (an admission she also makes to Josiah), commenting, "I saw the color of your eyes" (91). She seems to have hit on a subject of shame for Tayo, for he "did not look at her," responding only, "Mexican eyes . . . the other kids used to tease me" (92). Here "Mexican" signifies not only shame—of his uncertain paternity, of his mother's separation from the People—but also Tayo's and Night Swan's shared mestizaje and their shared colonial experience. Just as the novel indigenizes Night Swan

as a bearer of ceremonial practice, it posits the mixed-blood Tayo as a repository of the colonial history of Laguna. In order to tell the stories of what it means to be Laguna, Tayo must realize, as Night Swan explains, that those who tease Tayo "are afraid . . . Indians or Mexicans or whites—most people are afraid of change. They think if their children have the same color of skin, the same color of eyes, that nothing is changing" (92). Drawing once again on the language of "sameness," but this time in a manner critical of Laguna rather than of state-national assimilation, Night Swan's comments underscore the shared colonial history of Mexico and Laguna and the need, for both, of a decolonial imaginary to effect change in the ceremonies and combat the People's separation from themselves in the presence of colonial discourse.

The Laguna community's failure to comprehend Night Swan's power as traditional or spiritual highlights the extent to which colonialist discourse erases Indigenous presence in Mexicanidad. As with Harley in the Y Bar, the potential solidarity of identification becomes circumscribed by discourses of competition and shame, as the people in and around Laguna fail to see Indians in Mexicans.[35] Night Swan, a migrant Mexicana, nevertheless exhibits a curing capacity indicative of Indigenous healing practices. Yet she also compounds the difficulty of recognizing the mutability of tradition by eschewing traditional tools of curanderismo. Instead of native herbs and plants, Night Swan heals through pop music and dance.

The Victrola, her tool of choice, requires more labor than the simple flipping of a switch or turning of a dial; she must "crank" it to transition into and out of the music. When she first performs for Josiah, for instance, the scene begins and ends with the phonograph: "Josiah heard her cranking the Victrola; the needle scratched over the

[35] My thanks to Kirby Brown for this insight.

flamenco music" (77). The Victrola, a common name afforded phonographs regardless of brand after the immense success of the first Victrolas in the 1900s, gives Night Swan a certain amount of control over the running time of the discs she plays since it relies on her labor to start it.[36] But it also means that when Tayo hears "Y volveré" scratching out of the phonograph as he approaches her door, Night Swan has timed the song perfectly (early discs had notoriously short running times), thereby materially enacting simultaneity as, in the early 1950s, she plays a song from the early 1970s using technology from the 1910s.

Because phonographs of the sort Night Swan uses were acoustic rather than the later (post-radio) electric machines, the entire sonic output was contingent upon the user, the machine itself, and the discs on which the songs were recorded. Andre Millard notes, for example, that "[t]he phonograph and its record is a good example of a technological system in which each element is dependent on the other . . . Every improvement in the mechanics of reproduction . . . had to be matched by improvements in the chemical composition of the records or the benefits might be wasted" (11).[37] Though Millard here focuses on the production of recordings, the implications of this statement for playback as mechanical reproduction are vast and significant to an understanding of Night Swan's role in the ceremony. Night Swan demonstrates for Tayo, through the materiality of the disc and the Victrola, that he can listen for simultaneity in the same way he can listen for the emotions behind Auntie Thelma's voice.

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[36] Andre Millard notes in *American on Record* that after its release in 1906, "The Victrola overturned existing ideas about what a talking machine should look like and established the basic design of disc players for the next 20 years" (132).

[37] Interestingly, the World War II exhaustion of shellac supplies, "the principal component used in making all discs between about 1896 and 1948 [and] a resinous compound secreted by tree insects native to India," necessitated a shift in disc material to vinyl, "whose basic component is PVC, a much higher quality material" (Day 19). Vinyl not only reduced significantly the amount of "scratchy" background noise, it also increased the running time since turntables could run at 33 1/3 rpm rather than 78. Night Swan's use of the shellac disc, then, furthers the centripetal global and temporal movement of the narrative ceremony.

Moreover, the simultaneity of movement and stasis, of change and endurance, literally sounds in the "scratchy Victrola." Unlike the "plug" which connects the jukebox to a distant power source and thereby preserves a logic of separation, the need to "crank" the Victrola (another circular movement) and the centripetal motion of the needle over the disc, reveals the pattern of mobility Night Swan seeks to convey to Tayo. When the song is played on the phonograph, that is, the stylus "tracks" around the imprinted grooves, essentially "feeling" the vibrations carved in by the original recording. As the stylus or needle migrates around the disc, its whine, however scratchy, is determined by the confines, the walls, of the imprints originally carved out by the musicians in a recording studio. The form of the disc thus literally dictates what sounds the playback will produce. The centripetal movement of the stylus across the disc also performs the kind of movement necessary for the "sounding" of the ceremonial pattern across time and space. Not only does Night Swan, as a migrant curandera-dancer, carry the song and the means of reproduction with her, but also the disc itself carries with it a particular means of ordering the experiences of the story unfolding before Tayo: an ordering mechanism, quite literally, in the grooves.

The grooves of the record through which Night Swan plays the song for Tayo—an intention made audible by the necessity of her labor to start the Victrola and the limited playback time of early discs—sound an archive of feeling that informs later instantiations of both simultaneity and Mexicanidad. Translated through Tayo's listening, the "feeling" of Night Swan's room maintains an intimate "familiarity" (a word Tayo would use to describe the cottonwoods outside the apartment when he returns) with the "sensibility" the People shared before the arrival of European naming.

The shared sensibility of the People that the narrative elucidates here also diametrically opposes "that old feeling" the veterans so desire in the bar scenes. As such

the jukebox and the Victrola represent material producers of not only different kinds of sounds, but also different possibilities for listening. As Harley demonstrates as he feeds quarters into the jukebox, the labor of commodity consumption that defines the possibility of assimilation only further alienates the consumer. Playing songs on the jukebox enacts similitude even as it marks the difference and distance between the player-consumer and the product he consumes. Night Swan's playing on the Victrola, on the other hand, joins her to the product of her labor as it articulates the song to the ceremonial pattern of which she and Tayo are parts and performs the temporal and spatial movement according to which Tayo will understand that pattern.

After his uncle Robert takes him west to the hogan of the Diné medicine man, and with some gentle prodding from Betonie himself, Tayo finally articulates his anxieties about Night Swan, which emerge from a matrix of anxieties about whether she might be "bad" as Auntie Thelma says, whether she may have misled Josiah and Tayo in encouraging them to buy Mexican cattle from her cousin Ulibarri, and whether, as a consequence, the cattle had killed Josiah (115). Tayo's mention of Night Swan, that "she said something to me once. About our eyes. Hazel-green eyes" motivates Betonie's vision of Tayo's place in a much larger story, a story for which "we have all been waiting for help a long time" (115). Like the sound that comes out of the record's grooves, Betonie reveals to Tayo, first in words and then in the centripetal motion of the sand painting, that the pattern has been seen before, that he, and, in turn, Night Swan and Josiah are all integral parts of the pattern of the story. That pattern, of course, centers on Laguna.

IV. Enjambment and Grooving as Nationalist Literary Techniques

In the material forms of the jukebox and Harley's listening practice on one hand and the Victrola and Tayo's listening practice on the other hand, *Ceremony* seems to recognize in the United States and Mexico competing colonial discourses of assimilation that threaten to de-tribalize the Pueblos across time. Juxtaposing the two material forms and the two modes of listening implies dangers in the U.S. form borne out in the Mexican song. Mexicanidad in this rendering serves as a reminder to the Pueblos of the potential for detribalization, or what Guillermo Bonfil Batalla calls "de-Indianization":

> De-Indianization is a historical process through which populations that originally possessed a particular and distinctive identity, based upon their own culture, are forced to renounce that identity, with all the consequent changes in their social organization and culture. De-Indianization is not the result of biological mixture, but of the pressure of an ethnocide that ultimately blocks the historical continuity of a people as a culturally differentiated group. (17)

Both Bonfil Batalla's definition and Silko's attention in the novel to Indigenous structures of feeling suggest that the application of the term "Mexican," while revealing of the social processes of acculturation, state citizenship, and the power of colonial and state-national discourse, also reveals the extent to which discourse cannot fully encompass the embodied practices of listening.

In fact, the non-discursive structures of listening in the narrative—Tayo's awareness of the "feeling" emanating from Night Swan's room, the veterans' seeking for "that old feeling"—draw our attention once again to the space between enjambed lines, to the blank excess that enjambment creates. In attempting to discern the utility of an aesthetics of transition between the poetry and prose elements in *Ceremony*, Robert Dale Parker concedes that the differences in lineation between the two

> invit[e] us to see a distinction between the poetry and the prose, while the potpourri of continuity and interruption in the transitions between poetry and prose repeatedly bridges the distinction, highlights it, or plays variations on it. In

> that way, Silko draws on poetry and prose without singling out either for an exalted role in representing orality and oral narrative, even as she continues to take advantage of the long-founded cultural expectation that poetry especially figures the romantic aura of voice and orality. (139)

That "aura," which I locate in the space of enjambment and which Parker locates in the space between poetry and prose sections, reveals how spaces, like silences, are filled with meanings that exceed the linguistic realm. Though the witchery might like to suggest that nothing exists in separation, *Ceremony* reveals that so-called "blank space" is rife with affective and non-discursive meaning.

Awareness of the influence of non-discursivity on Silko's poetics and narrative style becomes integral to an understanding of how Night Swan "articulates" her own listening practice. Whereas attention to the Hank Williams songs on the jukebox and "Y Volveré" on the Victrola demonstrates a relatively recent history of the threats assimilation has posed to Laguna, Night Swan's listening practices, as evidenced in the flamenco she dances, call on a much longer history and a form of endurance beyond the narrative ceremony. The power in Night Swan's dance, which I argue manifests itself as a creative power of prophetic vision, enacts an embodied expression of listening independent of language.

That expression comes from flamenco's characteristic zapateado, or footwork. The first time she dances for Josiah, for instance, in the moments after he hears her cranking the Victrola, he is attuned, at first, only to the sound of the zapateado, "and he wondered if Lalo and the afternoon customers in the bar downstairs could hear it." Not just the footfalls but also the sounds they generate, their echoes, create an anxiety that hinges on Josiah's and others' apprehension of their undisclosed meaning. He quickly forgets how others may interpret the stomping, "because the spinning and tossing of her body and the momentum of the music had gathered him close, and he found himself

breathing hard and sweating when the Victrola finally ran down" (77). Through the dance, Night Swan does not simply close the space between herself and Josiah, a space that remained even after the narrative implies that they had become romantically involved; rather, she fills the space with a story told in the halting upper-body movements and earth-clenching zapateado.

Having literally shaken Josiah with the story told in dance (a story not yet intelligible to him), she complements the dance with another story, told linguistically, of an adulterous love affair from her youth. I noted above that her unnamed lover reveals to Night Swan her power through fear as much as through love. What I have not mentioned is that the power of her flamenco, what some may call her duende, revealed itself only in her lover's death. As she dances out the pain of his leaving, the men watching her at the tavern become at once terrified and entranced, apprehending the historical association of flamenco with bull-fighting, and seeing in Night Swan "the bull and at the same time the killer." [38] The guitar player stops playing, and still she dances. She explains to Josiah:

> I knew nothing of minutes or hours. There were changes I could feel; the boards of the dance floor began to flex and glisten. The creaking of the wood became a moan and a cry; my balance was precarious as if the floor were no longer level. And then I could feel something breaking under my feet, the heels of my dancing shoes sinking into something crushed dark until the balance and smoothness were restored once again to the dance floor. (79)

Night Swan pauses in her narration, allowing a silence to fill the room, to announce a transition. She continues with the revelation that her lover had been stomped to death by his horses that very night.

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[38] Federico García Lorca, who defines "duende" as "a power, not a work . . . a struggle, not a thought" (49), proposes that "[n]either in Spanish dance nor in the bullfight does anyone amuse himself. The duende takes it upon himself to make us suffer by means of a drama of living forms, and clears the stairways for an evasion of the surrounding reality" (59).

The suggestion that through dance Night Swan killed her lover by controlling the horses articulates her to another Mexicana in the novel, Betonie's grandmother, Blue Shawl woman. Though Tayo notices Betonie's hazel eyes upon first meeting, prompting the Diné healer to divulge, "My grandmother was a remarkable Mexican with green eyes," Betonie forestalls further explanation. Presumably not wanting to overwhelm Tayo with the ceremony's vastness, the multiple boundaries and times across which it traverses, Betonie resumes his own genealogy after the story of the witchery and completion of the sand painting ceremony. Indeed, only when Tayo arises the morning after the sand painting ceremony, having dreamt all night about the Mexican cattle, does he realize that "there were no boundaries; the world below and the sand paintings inside became the same" (134). Betonie, recognizing Tayo's willingness to listen, begins, "It all started a long time ago" (135). He then launches a genealogy of Mexicanidad that offers potential familial links between himself and Night Swan, links strengthened through the ability of the flamenco to inspire visions of the Mexican cattle just as the sand-painting inspired Tayo's dreams.

Betonie's story begins with some Navajo (Diné) hunters encamped just to the northwest of a settlement at San Mateo. As the old men sit around the camp fire, the young men become restless. "There had been no raiding for many years," Betonie contextualizes, "but they could sense the feeling of riding at night through piñon trees, galloping through the cool wind along the flats" (135). As the young men ride, fully prepared to return to the camp, they halt upon observing a "light-colored object fall[ing] out of the tree, lightly like a bird" (136). As they look up into the tree from where the blue lace shawl fell, they see her: "She did not cry like captives did, or jabber in her own language with tears running down her face. She held her mouth tight, teeth clenched under her wide brown face" (136). The young Mexicana, like Night Swan, wields a

power that the men fear, though none wants to admit it. Her power, in fact, surfaces because of what she does *not* do; refusing to act in accordance with the men's expectations of a Mexican captive, Blue Shawl controls through silence. Indeed, her silence forces the men to account for their actions, specifically by removing her to the hogan of Betonie's grandfather Descheeny.

Like the hunters who originally abduct her, Descheeny's wives and the People fear the silence and strangeness of the Mexican captive. Descheeny's wives tell him, "It is a disgrace the way you sleep with her every night. We try to teach our children to avoid touching alien things, but every day they see you do it" (138). Similarly, Betonie explains that "although the people detected changes in the ceremonies Descheeny performed, they tolerated them because of his acknowledged power to aid victims tainted by Christianity or liquor. But after the Mexican captive came, they were terrified, and few of them stayed to see the conclusion of the ceremonies" (139). Blue Shawl woman, apprehending a pattern much larger, more encompassing than individual, isolated healings, has sought out an alliance between her knowledge and Descheeny's "ceremonies, . . . the chants and the stories they grew from," suggesting her familiarity with the violent and dangerous consequences of the colonial and imperial designs of the witchery (139).

Betonie's genealogy then reverses course and assumes a jarring ambiguity wrought by the space that separates two paragraphs. In the succeeding paragraph, Betonie's own narrative voice moves from a third person account to a first-person account of his grandmother's birth:

> The day I was born they saw the color of my eyes, and they took me from the village. The Spaniards in the town looked at me, and the Catholic priest said, "Let her die." They blamed the Root Woman for this birth and they told her to leave the village before dark. She waited until they had gone, and she went to the old trash pile in the arroyo where they left me. She took me north to El Paso, and

> years later she laughed about how long she had waited for me in that village full of dirty stupid people. (140)

The punctuation, through the continued use of quotation marks from the preceding paragraph, suggests that Betonie is still speaking. But the transition from the preceding paragraph in which he describes Blue Shawl and Descheeny "plott[ing] the course of the ceremony by the direction of dark night winds and by the colors of the clay in drought-ridden valleys," to Blue Shawl's own relation of her coming into the world, of her place in the ceremony, constitutes a transition for which the reader is prepared only by the space of the page. The silence of that space heralds a coincidence between the captive and Night Swan: residence at El Paso. Though masked (formed) as a genealogy, Betonie here reveals the ceremonial significance of Tayo's encounter with Night Swan, whose powers of prophecy, of dance, of the strangeness of Mexicanidad all converge on her migrations across time and space.

Instead of conflicting with Betonie's healing power, Night Swan's instantiation of migration through flamenco and through the Mexican cattle offers a centrifugal complement to the centripetal movement of the sand-painting. Most importantly, it is through the footfalls of the flamenco, which replicate migratory movement, that Night Swan offers to Josiah the vision of the Mexican cattle that he, in turn, realizes. Though linguistically and narratively, Night Swan's suggestion that Josiah buy the stringy, hardy Mexican cattle from her cousin Ulibarri appears well after she first dances for him, her ability to impel the movement of livestock through dance suggests that she had already planted the seed—sans language—in the first stomps of her intimate performance for Josiah. Josiah's vision, inspired by Night Swan's flamenco, of a resilient breed of cattle that would survive the seasonal droughts so common in the desert, then joins the pattern of the ceremony of which she tells Tayo he is already a part.

In *Other Destinies*, Owens compares Josiah's prophetic vision with the creative act of storytelling, as he writes, "Like Thought-Woman, Josiah has made a story about the cattle that seems to compel the special breed into existence" (183). But as with the Fly and Hummingbird story-poems that Silko includes throughout the text, compelling the breed into existence "isn't very easy" (237); it takes Tayo's work, in this case, to bring the cattle back to his family's ranch at Laguna. Tayo's search for the lost cattle is figured as a ritual hunt that directs Tayo to the convergence of political and spiritual health at Laguna.

Just as Tayo conceives of the search for the Mexican cattle as a hunt, the story's clues as to the significance of the cattle for the People's survival is continually underscored by the presence of "Mountain Lion, the hunter. Mountain lion, the hunter's helper" (182). When Tayo begins to doubt Betonie's vision, begins to buy into the white doctors' insistence that "it was all superstition, seeing Josiah when they shot those goddamn Japs; it was all superstition, believing that the rain had stopped coming because he had cursed it," the appearance of the mountain lion hardens his resolve and aids in making the decision to continue the hunt (181). Likewise, after he escapes from the Texans who patrol the white rancher's property, where the cattle have been fenced in, and who leave Tayo in their search for the mountain lion they will never find, Tayo encounters the hunter. He sees that the hunter "wore his hair long, tied back with white cotton string in the old style," a description that resonates with the descriptions of both Night Swan and Betonie. But he hears, too, the hunter singing a familiar song: "He didn't want to interrupt the hunter to ask, but he was wondering where he was from, and where he had learned the Laguna song" (193). Tayo's previous experiences with song have led him to this question, which bespeaks an awareness of the inter-relatedness of song and movement, song and space, and song and belonging.

All of those relations converge as Tayo enacts another spacing, a material replication of Silko's poetics of enjambment, when he discovers the Mexican cattle enclosed on the property of a white rancher on Mount Taylor. As Tayo ascends the mountain, the narrator explicitly illustrates the scope of colonial discourse across the space of the landscape, and allows Tayo to move beyond it in memory and story: "The white ranchers called this place North Top, but he remembered it by the story Josiah had told him about a hunter who walked into a grassy meadow up here and found a mountain-lion cub chasing butterflies; as long as the hunter sang a song to the cub, it continued to play. But when the hunger thought of the cub's mother and was afraid, the mountain-lion cub was startled, and ran away" (172). Josiah's story surfaces in Tayo's memory to cut through the colonized name in the same way that Tayo would cut through the white landowner's fence to drive the stolen Mexican cattle through. Tayo is under no illusions about the purpose of the fence; he knows that it represents the white landowner's, and the witchery's, separation of the People from earth, now broken into discrete and ownable properties. And, the narrator continues, "the people knew what the fence was for: a thousand dollars a mile to keep Indians and Mexicans out; a thousand dollars a mile to lock the mountain in steel wire, to make the land his [the white man's]" (174). When Tayo cuts through the wire to insert a space in the line of the fence that the cattle will fill as they file out, his silent act breaks the white owners' meanings apart from their signifier—the fence itself—as deftly as Silko breaks apart the grammatical unity of a line through enjambment.

Once he begins to open that space and fill it with his own intentions, shaped by Josiah's prophetic vision of the cattle, Tayo also recognizes "the lie" that he had internalized to that point. As he cuts into the fence, that is, he finds it difficult even to think that the white landowner would have stolen the cattle. "He knew then," the narrator

says, that "he had learned the lie by heart—the lie which they had wanted him to learn: only brown-skinned people were thieves; white people didn't steal, because they always had the money to buy whatever they wanted." As with Silko's poetics of enjambment and Night Swan's visionary dancing, Tayo's act of cutting through the fence facilitates his emergent decolonial consciousness. Realizing the lie in all of it—the desire to belong, the shame of separation—Tayo "cut into the wire as if cutting away at the lie inside himself" (177). While still on the enclosed, white-owned ranch, having been apprehended and then released by Texan patrollers, Tayo's realization again transforms his shame into anger at his friends' desire for "white things":

> the bright city lights and loud music, the soft sweet food and the cars—all these things had been stolen, torn out of Indian land: raw living materials for their ck'o'yo manipulation. The people had been taught to despise themselves because they were left with barren land and dry rivers. But they were wrong. It was the white people who had nothing; it was the white people who were suffering as thieves do, never able to forget that their pride was wrapped in something stolen, something that had never been, and could never be, theirs. (189)

The witches' manipulation extends to more than just the distancing and deadening of "raw living materials." Tayo realizes as he hides in the mountains that the whole philosophy that legitimizes the conversion of the earth into raw resources not only comes from death but causes death. "He had been so close to it," he realizes, "caught up in it for so long that its simplicity struck him deep inside his chest: Trinity Site, where they exploded the first atomic bomb, was only three hundred miles to the southeast, at White Sands . . . Los Alamos, only a hundred miles northeast of him now" (228). As Tayo walks up to the mine shaft where the U.S. government had extracted uranium out of Indian land, with Indian labor, in the interest of the global war effort during which Tayo had seen his uncle's death imposed on that of a Japanese soldier, he understands that "he had arrived at the point of convergence where the fate of all living things, and even the

earth, had been laid" (228). Tayo's understanding, his final apprehension of the pattern, emerges not just from his relationship to the land, but from his guidance toward listening and seeing the material history of the land, the cultivation in his encounters with Night Swan and Betonie of an "ear for the story and [an] eye for the pattern" (236).

As Sharon Holm persuasively argues, an exclusive critical emphasis on the symbiotic relationship between story and land in *Ceremony* risks losing sight of the legal and material-historical forces at work in the novel. "[T]he historical continuity of territorial access and isolation that magnifies the symbiotic, generative relationship between oral stories and the land," she argues, "has also encouraged a problematic critical approach, particularly if issues of Native sovereignty and Indian nationalism are considered" (244). To "rethink the Indian world" in this novel, as Womack challenges, means recognizing the interplay between movement and occupancy at work in Laguna's ability to resist colonialism. While Tayo's migration and hunt for the cattle is certainly significant to his own healing, Silko also offers an expansion of "the Indian world" in the novel in the the spaces that at once embody and engender sounding and listening as decolonial practices.

Working backwards from the novel's post-war setting, the regimentation of the jukebox, the circular "grooving" of the Victrola, and the zapateado of the flamenco dance each reflect the multiply colonized space of the Southwest as they manifest materially the stories of their social and cultural provenance. Reading the regimentation of the jukebox not just through the story of the witchery but also backwards through Night Swan's flamenco, allows us to hear the echoes of even the earliest migrations of Spanish settlers into what is now New Mexico. It allows us to hear through the de-Indianization policies of Mexican nationalism to place Laguna historically as a tribal nation that has endured by adamantly contesting the boundaries of state citizenship. Silko demonstrates the need to

keep listening for the resonances between stories and histories in order to develop a responsive and responsible model of Laguna self-determination, one that indigenizes multiple forms of cultural expression.

At novel's end, as Old Grandma listens to Thelma and Tayo tell their stories, she responds, "It seems like I already heard these stories before . . . only thing is, the names sound different" (242). Readers attuned to the politics of listening in *Ceremony*, to the ways in which material form changes both the name and nature of the same stories repeated over time, may say the same thing. That recognition of the repeated cycle of stories and histories describes the politics of listening in *Ceremony*. It is a politics that adapts to innovations in material techniques and technologies with the knowledge that the story will end the same way it has since "time immemorial, time back," with the voices of Laguna calling out from the center.

Chapter Two: Tócame una canción, Sandra: Mexicanidad and Pocha/o Voice in *Woman Hollering Creek*

In March of 1969, Alberto Baltazar Urista Heredia proclaimed at the Denver Youth Conference that the current U.S. Southwest comprised Chicanos' Indigenous homeland, "elaborat[ing] for the first time the concept of Aztlán" (Rendón 9). In "El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán" Alurista, as the activist and poet is commonly known, motivated the mythical idea of Aztlán, drawn from the migration story of the pre-colonial Aztec-Mexicas, for a Chicano nationalism premised on unity, collective self-determination, and brotherhood. Echoing Armando Rendón's placement of Alurista at the vanguard of Chicano nationalist—and indigenist—ideology, anthropologist Martha Menchaca writes that Alurista "was one of the first Chicano scholars, if not the first, to have been well-versed in Pre-Columbian history" such that he could mobilize such a powerful origin story in the service of el Movimiento Chicano (20).

Recent scholarship in Chicana/o studies critiques the idea of Aztlán for its adherence to an indigenist Chicano politics that tends to elide the contemporary political realities of Indigenous peoples with competing claims to the lands in the U.S. Southwest; notably, many of those critiques identify the source of the indigenist turn toward Aztlán in Mexican nationalism. Indeed, what both Rendón and Menchaca gloss over in according Alurista the privilege of being the first Chicano to recognize the political and rhetorical utility of the myth of Aztlán is his own migrant status. According to the biographical sketches for Alurista's papers housed in the Benson Latin American collection at the University of Texas at Austin and the California Ethnic and Multicultural Archives at the University of California at Santa Barbara, the Chicano activist, poet, and playwright was born August 8, 1947 in Mexico City, received his

primary education in Morelos, and moved to California at the age of thirteen (1960). This information, particularly the location of his primary education, demystifies his knowledge of the pre-Columbian Mesoamerican past, since it places him squarely within the Mexican state-sponsored public education system, for which Aztec history formed the foundation of a curriculum intended to unify the populace by promoting the glories of a shared national history. According to Natividad Gutiérrez, "establishment of the Mexican system of national education began with a standardized program of primary education launched in the late nineteenth century and reached its modern form—free, secular, and compulsory—in the final years of the 1940s," specifically with the passage of the Education Plan of 1947 under Presidente M. Alemán (70). Part of that standardization, as Gutiérrez traces, was the selection of a single pre-colonial ethnic identity—that of the Aztecs—to exalt over the plurality of ethnically-affiliated, contemporary Indigenous communities; the Aztec monolith proved expedient for Mexican national(ist) historiography because of its vast mytho-poetic tradition and because narrating the conquest of Tenochtitlán enabled the superimposition of Spanish over Indigenous rulers to the exclusion of those Indigenous communities who either aided the conquest or continued to struggle against imperial cultural and political restructuring.

Thus, Alurista's pronouncement of a primarily and secondarily Indigenous Chicano nationalism founded on the migration myth of Aztlán constitutes a moment of uncanny intercontextuality wherein the state-sponsored educational apparatus of mid-century Mexicanidad meets the political volatility of 1960s-70s U.S. higher education. Recognizing the significance of this moment means recognizing the always already transnational scope of Chicano nationalism during the decade-long (1965-1975) height of el Movimiento even in its most protectionist ideologies.

By 1991, when Sandra Cisneros' short story collection *Woman Hollering Creek* was published, the Civil Rights era of cultural nationalisms in the United States had given way to the promise of what some were calling "postnationalism." Viewed optimistically as the end of an era of nationalist conflict through transnational and global economic alliances, the promises of postnationalism included an opening of borders, an end to Cold War protectionism, and the availability of culture(s) to the now-global market.[39] Published in the wake of conservative immigration legislation in 1986 and on the eve of passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement, *Woman Hollering Creek* recognizes the dialectical relationship between Chicanidad and Mexicanidad that had been silenced during el Movimiento. It also recognizes the gendered silence imposed by an uncritical emphasis on a Chicano "brotherhood" in which Chicanas and Mexicanas were relegated to a symbolic familial order that privileged la Virgen as the archetype of the long-suffering mother and transgression of which interpellated women as malinchistas, traitors to La Raza borne of the figure of La Malinche (another symbol inherited from Mexicanidad). *Woman Hollering Creek* addresses both the transnational and feminist paradigms excluded from Movimiento-era Chicano nationalism through Cisneros's epigraphic incorporation of highly nationalist mid-twentieth century Mexican song traditions. With songs from the children's radio show *Cri-cri* (1935-65) along with bolero and ranchera genres, each engaged in post-revolutionary nation building, the author balances a critique of a romantic yet anthropological objectification of Mexicanidad with an equally pointed critique of negative U.S. stereotypes of "the Mexican" that often rely on marked impositions of class, gender, and race on subjectivity.

[39] The Winter 1991 issue of *New Perspectives Quarterly* was dedicated to the question of "postnationalism" in its North American manifestation as the debate over NAFTA. The pieces included therein, for instance, David Rieff's "Professional Aztecs and Popular Culture," substantiate the post-nationalist optimism that emerged in the aftermath of the Cold War.

Cisneros maintains this critical balance through the interpolation of a pocha/o politics of listening.

Like the musical traditions that Cisneros includes, the term pocho originated in Mexico in the wake of the Revolution, during which many Mexicana/os had fled to the United States to seek refuge. Their and particularly their children's exposure to the customs, language, and mores of the United States elicited this epithet from the likes of nationalists such as José Vasconcelos (Paredes, *Texas-Mexican* 154). Pochismo signifies an impurity and unassimilable otherness anathema to the centralizing and homogenizing tendencies of nation-state formation.[40] Thus, as a derogatory term, "pocho" served to carefully police and reify the geopolitical and ideological boundaries of the nation-state, particularly against the cultural machinations of its northern neighbor. Among Mexican-origin peoples in the United States, to be defined as pocha/o elicits many responses. While some joke about its usage in a form of self-critique that reveals a longing to return to the Mexican homeland, others embrace the term and its slippery connotations (ibid.). In its performance, whether intentional or not, of a relationship with cultural, expressive, and political forms defined as "other," pochismo recalls and rehearses a performance of listening in which the listener opens up to and engages with another/an Other, a circumstance that prevails among the characters in *Woman Hollering Creek*. A pocha/o politics of listening, then, is how pocha/os perform multiple negotiations with the terms of Mexicanidad in U.S. and Mexican contexts. Finally, as its history and contemporary usage by border-crossers such as Guillermo Gómez-Peña attests, pochismo as a social

[40] In a recent interview about his cyber-performance troupe, La Pocha Nostra, Guillermo Gómez-Peña defines pocha/o as "a cultural traitor or a cultural bastard. It's a term coined by Mexicans who never left Mexico to articulate the post-national Mexican experience. It's slightly derogative, but we have expropriated it as an act of empowerment. . . . So you can translate [La Pocha Nostra] loosely as the cartel of the cultural traitors, or there is another more poetic translation that essentially means 'our impurities'" ("Interview").

identification incorporates a multitude of subject positions and is thus neither monolithic or homogeneous.

Woman Hollering Creek initiates its politics of pocha/o listening through its use of songs, which direct readers toward audible Mexicana/o voices. The collection thus reveals a means by which Chicana/os structure community in a radical act of nation building for which the bricks and mortar are signifiers not of Chicanidad but of Mexicanidad. Cisneros, for instance, could have easily included Mexican American parodist Lalo Guerrero, bolerista Chelo Silva, or rancherista Lydia Mendoza to perform the cultural and narrative work of the epigraphic lyrics. That she turns to Mexican traditions here indicates the need to return to the historically conditioned discourses of Mexicanidad encoded in the songs themselves.

By incorporating songs from *Cri-cri* and the bolero and ranchera traditions, Cisneros draws the reader to a recognized, even codified "sound of Mexico." In dialogue with the stories, then, the epigraphs suggest that the characters in the collection exist in relationship to this aural tradition, negotiating the discursive trajectories of sound on both sides of the border. The sound of Mexico codified as the lamentation of the male singing charro, for instance, transmits the romance of the ranchera even as it represents in the U.S. popular imaginary Mexico's historical stasis and rural backwardness—the need for economic "development" and "progress."[41] Yet, by citing performances of the songs by

[41] Charles Ramírez-Berg comments on the use of Spanish song in film as a means of inserting in the audition of film-goers a recognizably non-Western space: "The song in Spanish places the protagonist outside the Empire of English, which in Hollywood movies means beyond the pale of rational discourse. Spanish . . . spoken outside of Spain in American films signifies that (a) the narrative has moved to a Third World country (or the barrio, or a Puerto Rican ghetto in New York, or the Southwestern border, which for Hollywood are all the same thing) where the rules of 'civilization' no longer apply; (2) because English cannot be relied on in this place, words and reasoning will be of little use (since rationality exists only in English); therefore, violent action is a very likely outcome" (49-50). Ramírez-Berg's analysis articulates the racialization of the "sound of Mexico" to an ideology of progress that implies a genealogy of Enlightenment and neo-liberal political and cultural economies.

female vocalists, Cisneros reveals that despite the state-nationalist tendency to homogenize race, gender, and class codes, the musical traditions themselves contain a complex heterogeneity as expressed in the voices of María Victoria and Lola Beltrán. Far from evoking a unified racial and national body, the performances Cisneros cites imply rupture and difference.

For most of *Woman Hollering Creek*, Cisneros guides through exclusion, refusing to incorporate contemporary musical traditions until the collection's end. Defining the sounds of Mexico thus speaks to a narrative of failed progress that characterizes discourses of Mexicanidad and, because of their dialectical relationship, Chicanidad. Acknowledging that absence of musical contemporaneity, Cisneros prefaces the final story, "*Bien* Pretty," with the Tejano conjunto "Ay Te Dejo en San Antonio." Geographically, she whisks readers from Mexico to a U.S. urban center with a large migrant and Mexican American population. And narratively, she draws attention to constructions and experiences of Mexicanidad among Chicana/os. Recognizing the fault lines in Mexican nationalist ideologies, Cisneros suggests, has repercussions for Chicana/o nationalisms, no longer the single, unified ethnic nation envisioned by Alurista's "Plan" but a set of experiences and expressions that differ based on region, gender, class, race, and generation.

Through its dialectical weaving of voice with text, *Woman Hollering Creek* re-imagines el Movimiento's nationalist foundations by literally sounding Mexico throughout the collection. Cisneros harnesses the power of voice and song to articulate through memory and nostalgia Chicana/o nationalisms that refuse to be confined to a single era or politics. By guiding readers to a listening experience that begins with typical or traditional Mexican musical traditions and ends with the Tejano conjunto, the author effectively updates and expands José E. Limón's 1973 call to Chicana/o scholars to

historicize our responses to Mexican stereotypes in popular culture. "Like other phenomena in contemporary Chicano life," Limón writes, "the struggle against stereotypes is not confined to the post-1965 period but should be understood as an historical activity" (267). The collection rejoins that the struggle is about more than stereotypes, and it continues far beyond 1974, the date conventionally designated as the "end" of el Movimiento. The dialectic Cisneros creates between song and text forms and performs the dialectic that exists between Chicanidad and "Mexico," both material and imagined. In order to acknowledge the work of el Movimiento and resist the tendency to confine, codify, and constrain it, the collection suggests, we need to examine the expressions of Chicana/o community that we hear through our pocha/o politics of listening.

By positing these songs and their articulation to Mexican nationalist ideology as a crucible out of which a pocha/o politics of listening emerges, the collection directs the reader to a mode of cultural listening that relies on both imagining and interrogating popular representations. With the epigraphic renditions of Mexican songs, Cisneros "plays" a soundtrack that mirrors the movement of the collections from childhood to young adulthood to womanhood. The title page of the first section, "My Lucy Friend Who Smells Like Corn," features the lines "También yo te quiero / y te quiero feliz,"[42] ascribed to the song's author, radio personality Francisco Gabilondo Soler. Though Cisneros does not provide the song's title, "La Muñeca Fea" (1935),[43] the familiar reader will associate Gabilondo Soler and his singing-cricket persona, Cri-cri, with the children's radio show of the same name. Featuring rhymes, songs, and cartoonish allegories, the show reveled in the innocence of youth.

[42] I also want/love you, and want you happy.
[43] "The Ugly Doll"

The stories of Barbie dolls and birthdays told by the child protagonists of the first section give way to a gradual loss of innocence in the second section, initiated with the bolero "Piel Canela" (1953)[44] on the section's title page. After providing the lines "Me importas tú, y tú, y tú / y nadie más que tú,"[45] the author offers the song's title, followed by "*Interpretada por* María Victoria / (Boby Capó, *autor*)." In this way Cisneros gives precedence not to the song-writer, Puerto Rican bolerista Boby (or Bobby) Capó, but instead to the sultry Mexicana interpreté, María Victora. The sensuousness of this song and of the bolero genre in general resonates with the narratives of burgeoning desire told by adolescent Mexicanas.

The third and final section traces this movement from youth to the edges of desire to its conclusion in the loss of innocence. The epigraph for the section, "There Was a Man, There Was a Woman," reads:

> Me estoy muriendo
>
> y tú como si nada
>
> --"Puñalada Trapera"
>
> Interpretada por Lola Beltrán
>
> (Tomás Méndez Sosa, autor)[46]

Innocence lost, this 1950 song suggests, entails more than simply increased awareness of one's own sexuality. No less than life is at stake for the protagonists of the third section, who face abandonment, rejection, and the literal threat of death inscribed into a conventional understanding of their roles as Mexicanas. However, like the storytellers in this section, this canción ranchera and its intérprete, Lola Beltrán, suggest the revision of

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[44] "Cinnamon Skin"

[45] "I care about you, and you, and you / and no one else but you."

[46] "I'm dying / and to you it's like nothing. –"A Stab in the Back" / Performed by Lola Beltrán / (Tomás Méndez Sosa, songwriter)

those roles based on Mexicanas' experiences with the tensions inherent in the conventions themselves.

The move to "Ay Te Dejo" as a final epigraphic musical performance recalls the function of song itself: it generates stories that appropriate from the past to inform the present. Composed by Santiago Jiménez, Sr. in the 1930s, "Ay Te Dejo" was recorded by his son, Leonardo ("Flaco") as late as the mid-1980s and remains a conjunto favorite today. Following the ranchera tradition, it appropriates a particular variety of discursive Mexicanidad. Yet it also parodically disrupts "Mexico" as a discursive formation that represents inferior class status and/or machismo. If Cisneros's selection of songs from popular post-revolutionary genres represents a particular ordering of the chaotic experiences of the Mexican Revolution and ensuing projects of nation building, then "Ay Te Dejo," in turn, represents a means of ordering an alternative, pocho experience. Whereas the children's song, the bolero, and the ranchera may represent predominantly bourgeois cultural productions of Mexicanidad, conjunto emerges out of a U.S. working-class tradition, inflected by its ranchera roots. "Ay Te Dejo" seems to recognize the irony of a primarily urban-produced musical tradition touting the rural lifestyle of what Manuel Peña deems "lo arrancherado" (12). But the song adds another layer of irony by replacing the urban center in the ranchera, thus drawing greater attention to the performance than to its presumed authenticity. As effected by the conjunto, then, pocha/o listening creates a site for a social and political subject aware of the exclusionary forces and interpellative practices of state-sponsored nationalisms. Cisneros thus offers at the collection's end a structural performance of the kind of pocha/o listening exhibited by the characters themselves throughout the stories.

I. *CRI-CRI* AND THE CORRUPTION OF INNOCENCE

As the first epigraphic song, "La Muñeca Fea" inaugurates the author's performance of pocha/o listening as a means of disarticulating innocence from nostalgia through the incorporation of value and desire. "Innocent" has many meanings: free from sexual desire, virginal; free of guilt or shame; lacking in worldly knowledge; not responsible. To possess innocence indicates an absence that nevertheless imbues its proprietor with the value of purity. But the characters in the first section of the collection, "My Lucy Friend Who Smells Like Corn," shoulder a burden of desire, shame, and worldly knowledge that undermines their ostensible childhood innocence.

The same could be said of the song. First aired in 1935, "La Muñeca Fea" emerged from what we may call the youth of post-revolutionary nationalist fervor. In the context of massive rural-to-urban and Mexico-to-U.S. migrations, as well as concerted government efforts to follow lines of capitalist development, Gabilondo Soler's radio show dramatized enduring racial and class tensions that belied the practical application of revolutionary ideology. Manuel Gamio's "indigenismo" programs, educational programs that endorsed bourgeois domesticity and hygiene, and the modernist turn in the art of Siqueiros, Rivera, Orozco, and Kahlo all masked the extreme economic disparities that characterized Mexican social and political life in the wake of the Revolution.[47] With "La Muñeca Fea" those contradictions are most fully illustrated in the tension between the music and the lyrics.

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[47] Manuel Gamio was one of the first architects of post-Revolutionary Mexicanidad; his *Forjando patria* lays out the application of the ideologies of *indigenismo* and *mestizaje* on which the success of a developing Mexican nation-state, in his estimation, would hinge. Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, on the other hand, has criticized Gamio and his forebears' vision of mestizo Mexico as "the imaginary Mexico" in contradistinction to "México profundo," or the deeper Indigenous nation. For a focused discussion on the role of Mexican modernist art and indigenismo in post-Revolutionary Mexico, see Desmond Rochfort's "The Sickle, the Serpent, and the Soil." For a discussion of the hygiene programs, many of which were broadcast over state-sponsored radio, see Katherine Bliss's "For the Health of the Nation" as well as Joy Elizabeth Hayes's "National Imaginings on the Air."

The song, which tells the story of an ugly and broken doll hiding in the corners for fear that someone will see her ugliness, is accompanied by a musical tradition that implies European purity and bourgeois value: the waltz. Gabilondo Soler's manipulation of the instrumentation intensifies this formal irony. In traditional three-quarter time, *el vals* employs a tin-tan-tan rhythm characterized by a lower, clipped chord on the first beat, followed by two extended, higher beats.[48] "La Muñeca Fea" at once relies on and violates the expectations of el vals as it opens with the strumming of a guitar on the first downbeat of each measure while a tinkling piano cascades through a range of high notes, hitting each half-note as though in response to the guitar. This opening instrumental juxtaposition suggests an intimate conversation between two people rather than the public space of a crowded ballroom. Furthermore, the low strumming of the guitar punctuates the high and almost frenzied piano as if it were a consoling masculine presence, calming the frightened muñeca with a gentle "there, there." Indeed, we do not hear precisely what she says, but in the first verse we learn that la muñeca "platicaba con los ratones."[49] Though she speaks to several rats, however, only one speaks back to her, paralleling the dialectical movement of the opening instrumental.

El ratón, in fact, speaks the two lines that form the epigraph for the first section: "También yo te quiero / y te quiero feliz." The line appears at the conclusion of the song's chorus, when el ratón presents la muñequita with a variety of objects to which she may belong:

Te quieren la escoba y el recogedor.

Te quieren el plumero ye el sacudidor.

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[48] Cisneros capitalizes on the prevalence of this rhythm in el vals as well as in rancheras and corridos, especially those interpreted by mariachis. The "tin-tan-tan" figure predominates in the collection's third section in particular.

[49] "talked with the rats"

Te quieren la araña y el viejo veliz.

También yo te quiero,

Y te quiero feliz. (Gabilondo Soler 162)[50]

Because of the dual meanings of the verb *querer*, la muñeca finds her own desire to belong faced with the longings and desires of others whose value fails to equate with the value of her friends, quienes no son los del mundo.[51] In other words, the rat seems to say, you may have once been whole, beautiful, and adored by your friends, but now that you are broken and ugly, you belong among any of these objects, or among los ratones. Your choice.

Gabilondo Soler romanticizes the world of la muñeca fea both literally and figuratively. As a children's show, *Cri-cri* infuses los rincones with nostalgia, imbuing the song with innocence as discussed above; conversely, in the words of el ratón, the song introduces an element of seduction contrary to our expectations of innocence. In his attempts to persuade la muñeca that she belongs among the society of los ratones, he limits her alternatives to those less desirable, those associated either with domestic labor (la escoba, el recogedor, el plumero, el sacudidor, even la araña, who invokes maternity and therein a specifically gendered conception of domestic labor) or with migration (la araña, el viejo veliz). El ratón recognizes that the doll's one-time friends have abandoned her precisely because they are out of touch with the material realities that govern those deemed of lesser value. Hence, "no son los del mundo." Gabilondo Soler's invocation of class in this children's song thus invites a nostalgic remembrance of a time consigned to

[50] "The broom and dustpan want you.
The duster and rug beater want you.
The spider and old suitcase want you.
And I also want/love you
And I want you happy.

[51] Who are not of this world

the past even as it demonstrates the encroachment of corruption on memory's innocence, as symbolized most graphically by la muñeca's own dismemberment. Not only has she been abandoned by her community, but su "bracito ya se le rompió."[52] In an ultimate and supreme irony, Gabilondo Soler creates a kind of urban pastoral by placing within a bourgeois form, el vals, a romantic description of the distance between the broken and devalued classes and those quien no son los del mundo, the bourgeois themselves.

Though recent chronicles grant that *Cri-cri* created a nostalgic depiction of a mythic or bygone world, one displaced by rapid industrialization and urbanization, this song actually allegorizes the social and economic challenges facing many migrant and peasant subjects in 1930s Mexico.[53] But by rendering those challenges in the setting of childhood, the song is complicit with the ideological function of nostalgia that serves to obfuscate the source of the socioeconomic hierarchy that it depicts. The child narrators in "My Lucy Friend Who Smells Like Corn," on the other hand, demonstrate an awareness of their socioeconomic, ethnic, and gendered selves as at once an encroachment on pure innocence and an investiture in agency, albeit limited; it is an awareness that curtails nostalgic innocence. The children in this section thus balance Mexicanidad-as-stereotype, Mexicanidad-as-poverty, and Mexicanidad-as-desire in an act of pocha/o listening that takes up la muñeca's decision-making process where the song leaves off.

As in the song, the specter of socioeconomic value recurs throughout the narratives of the first section. For instance, in the first story where Cisneros derives the

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[52] her "little arm is broken"

[53] In an illustrated anthology of *Cri-cri*'s songs, for instance, Elisa Ramírez writes, "Cri-Cri representa una época, y desde sus inicios, muestra una nostalgia por la pureza del entorno, la vida rural y provinciana, la armonía sin ruido, la libertad de los mares. Ese mundo ya había desaparecido cuando él lo canto. Por eso nos sentimos como si estuviéramos mirando una foto vieja y anticuada; compartimos con él, en cambio, la nostalgia. [Cri-Cri represents an era and from its beginnings, it demonstrated a nostalgia for the purity of the surroundings, rural and provincial life, noiseless harmony, the freedom of the seas. This world had already disappeared when he sang of it. Thus he made us feel as if we were looking at an old and antiquated image; we shared with him, in turn, nostalgia]" (26).

section title, the first-person narrator couches her awareness of value in a statement of identification with Lucy. "But me I like that Lucy," she says, "corn smell hair and aqua flip-flops just like mine that we bought at the K mart for only 79 cents same time" (4). Rachel, the narrator of "Eleven," finds herself locked in a battle of wills with the aptly named teacher, "Mrs. Price," and she feels her eleven years "rattling inside [her] like pennies in a tin Band-Aid box" (7). Both "Salvador, Late or Early" and "Barbie-Q" hearken back to the song. Salvador, with his "limbs stuffed with feathers and rags," resembles la muñeca fea and "su carita [que] está llena de hollín,"[54] as do the singed Barbie dolls of "Barbie-Q." Moreover, the burnt dolls of the latter story recall the play of desire and value, or more properly, devaluation, where the narrator wants the dolls and wants them happy/happily. This last figuration in particular suggests the extent of the children's knowledge of their situation since it places the child-narrator, ostensibly innocent, in the position of the experienced and welcoming ratón.

Paralleling the narrator of "Barbie-Q" with el ratón also draws attention to the play of voices and perspectives in many of these stories. The first-person perspectives of "My Lucy Friend Who Smells Like Corn," "Eleven," and "Barbie-Q," for example, come up against the third-person of "Salvador, Late or Early," the subtitle a literal translation of the Spanish idiomatic phrase, "tarde o temprano," sooner or later. Both the third-person perspective and the translated title suggest what Harryette Mullen calls the "untranslatability of experience" in this collection even as it begs the question: untranslatable for whom? This section offers one possibility in the teacher who cannot remember Salvador's name, Mrs. Price of "Eleven," and the warehouse managers of "Barbie-Q." Each of these representations of Anglo-dominant authority in the text

[54] "her face full of soot"

enforces the silence and invisibility of these young Mexican and Mexican American boys and girls. Their experiences—their pains, pleasures, and play—remain untranslatable to the teachers and warehouse managers because they fail to accord with a discourse of Mexicanidad that does not allow for play, innocence, or feeling. With the exception of "Salvador," however, Cisneros allows the children to speak for themselves, to tell their own stories through a first-person narration that reveals through disruption the dominant discursive framework in which the children's voices continually fail to receive a hearing.

The relationship between value/class, skin color, and Anglo American assumptions about ethnicity are most pronounced in the section's penultimate story, "Mericans." Here, Junior's brown skin acts as a signifier of discursive Mexicanidad, reflecting the semantic constraint that race, class, and nostalgia impose on the term. After Michele (Micaela), the storyteller, comes from the Basilica, she finds her brother Junior talking to a woman and man, both of whom declare their foreignness through their inappropriate dress. Micaela recognizes quickly that "they're not from here. Ladies don't come to church dressed in pants. And everybody knows men aren't supposed to wear shorts" (20). The couple's violation of Mexican decorum marks them as American tourists, but it is their assumptions about Junior that reveal their U.S. ideology of Mexicanidad.

Notably, they approach Junior, who is squatting in a corner against the entrance to the church, rather than Keeks, who is alternately running around the square and drawing squiggly lines in the dirt. Micaela observes the woman offer Junior some gum and then ask, "Por favor . . . ¿Un foto?" (20). For the American tourist, capturing on film the poor Mexican boy becomes a means by which she can author a nostalgic, authentic remembrance of Mexico, one that she can purchase, consume, and easily digest since it fits into the scope of her understanding of "Mexico." The image of the lone male figure

squatting in front of the church captures for the tourist at once the romance and the poverty of the nation; Junior transforms bodily into a projection of nostalgia. "For the tourists," Mary Pat Brady writes, "the young boy is as static and unchanging, as outside their own temporality, as the Basilica itself" (127). Their nostalgic lens prevents the couple from seeing Keeks; playing fighter pilot, he is both too active and too contemporaneous to satisfy the touristic gaze.

When he speaks, however, Junior disrupts the transformation wrought by the tourists' gaze as well as their investment in their own discursively informed assumptions about Mexicanness. In a completely spontaneous articulation of his Mexicanness to his Americanness, he yells, "Hey, Michele, Keeks. You guys want gum?" (20). After the tourist's expression of shock that the "Mexican" boys speaks English, Junior replies, "Yeah . . . We're Mericans" (20). The tourists in this story, like the teachers and warehouse managers in earlier stories, conflate Mexicanidad with an ahistoricity that finds nostalgic expression in the "innocence" of children. Only an empty vessel can provide the fulfillment of nostalgia's promise of authenticity and therefore value. But Junior's speech-act disrupts the entire process. He tacitly professes cultural and linguistic knowledge that jars the couple from the familiar space of the nostalgic gaze. For the tourist, the conversion of the feminine "una foto" to the masculine "un foto" does not affect the image's value since it, in fact, affirms her subject position; however, Junior's equivalent move, the elision of the letter "a," reverses the terms of the encounter as his speech joins his identity as "Merican" to the tourists' memento, ironically corrupting its exchange value.

Micaela's narrative further enhances the counternarratives figured in Keeks's activity and Junior's speech. She draws a much more sophisticated portrait of

Mexicanidad as she characterizes the family members for whom the awful grandmother prays:

> There are so many prayers . . . to be given in the name of the husband and the sons and the only daughter who never attend mass. . . . For the grandfather who hasn't believed in anything since the first PRI elections. For my father, El Periquín, so skinny he needs his sleep. For Aunti Light-skin, who only a few hours before was breakfasting on brain and goat tacos after dancing all night in the pink zone. For Uncle Fat-face, the blackest of the black sheep. (17)

Micaela establishes her cultural knowledge by placing her family in an historicized and contemporary popular context. From PRI elections to the pink zone to the awful grandmother's prayers themselves, Micaela's description belies any homogeneous characterization of Mexico or Mexicana/os. Moreover, Micaela and her brothers themselves represent the quintessential pocha/o figures navigating the complexities of both Mexican conventions and American assumptions. Micaela best performs that pochismo in her sing-song re-voicing of Junior's phrase: "We're Mericans, We're Mericans, and inside the awful grandmother prays" (20). The word "Mericans," a diminution of Americans and sonic/phonemic substitution for Mexicans, renders audible to Micaela the fault lines in two national discourses. Certainly, it complicates the stereotype of the lazy Mexican (or Indian, for that matter) in opposition to the productive U.S. citizen. But further, the conjunction "and" separates the communal identification of the first clause, "we're Mericans," from the activity in the Basilica, "inside the awful grandmother prays." The conjunction bespeaks both a geographic distance from the grandmother and a temporal relation. Micaela's final "song" positions her pocha/o politics as alongside and uncontainable by Mexico's institutional architecture.

II. Bolero and Revolutionary Desire

If "La Muñeca Fea" represents an articulation of the height of Mexican nationalism, "Piel Canela," written in 1953, incorporates into the nationalist narrative the disillusionment of the 1950s, demonstrated most prominently by the mass migrations during and after the Bracero Program. The promises of "development," with its corollaries of modernization, urbanization, and industrialization, had failed to materialize in post–World War II Mexico. According to Alicia Schmidt Camacho, for instance, "by the mid-1950s, the Bracero Program was a source of concern for Mexican nationalists [who] depicted emigration as a matter of national disgrace" (71). Both "Piel Canela" and the story "One Holy Night" link to the disillusionment of Mexican nationalism in the 1950s as they re-sound the relationship between capitalist "development," migration, indigenism, and desire.

"Piel Canela" complicates the discursive construction of a nostalgic and reified Mexico by introducing the figure, however spectral, of Indigenous Mexican womanhood. Cisneros's turn to the bolero genre reminds us that part of the work of nostalgia in the era of *Cri-cri* was to fill voids carved out by the migration and urbanization of largely Indigenous populations. Bolero, which became a musical metonym for the nation in the 1920s, is characterized by urban indulgence and sensuality. But encoded in its urban themes are its geographic movement from Yucatán and Veracruz, where it was originally imported from Cuba, to its ultimate home in Mexico City. Bolero's popularity thus coincided with the rise of Mexican nationalist indigenismo but also with the physical migration of many Indigenous Yucatecans, whose attempts at land reclamation were quelled with military force.[55] Both features inform the narrative of "One Holy Night,"

[55] On the latter point, see Moreno Rivas's discussion of Felipe Carrillo Puerto. In addition to fighting, literally to the death, for Mayan and agrarian rights, Carrillo Puerto also advocated cultural reforms and

which traverses the courtship, love making, and deceit between its thirteen-year-old narrator and thirty-seven-year-old Chaq Uxmal Paloquín, or Boy Baby. In the storyteller's performance of pocha listening, she implicitly critiques the indigenist move that consigns Native, specifically Mayan, spiritual and revolutionary practices to the past in the service of contemporary mestizo struggles, a move that characterizes not only Mexican but Chicana/o nationalist discourses as well.[56] In its place Cisneros offers a critical speculation as to what it might mean to join the experience of a migrant, female subject-position to the experience of a migrant, nationalist song tradition.

Drawing on bolero's generic contours, "Piel Canela" couches sexual desire in fluctuations between utopia and nostalgia, a glorious future or an idyllic past. In that sense, it seems to offer the same options that post-revolutionary mexicanidad offered as well, here figured on the body of a woman. The epigraph notes that Boby Capó, an Afro–Puerto Rican composer of the 1950s who brought tremendous innovations to the international bolero style, authored "Piel Canela."[57] The singer tells his lover that if all the beauty of the natural world is suddenly lost, beauty itself would remain in the

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exchanges in the musical arena. His radio station XEY, "Voz del Gran Partido Socialista," transmitted Yucatecan musical innovations—including bolero—as well as party news (108).

[56] See Cooper Alarcón, Saldaña-Portillo, and Contreras for more thorough examinations of the indigenist practices of Chicana/o nationalist and feminist texts. Each draws attention to the ways in which Chicana/o indigenism accords with Mexico's nationalist narratives that relegated Indigenous politics and subjectivities to a pre-modern past, superseded by the modern Republic.

[57] The origins and history of bolero are well-documented in Ed Morales's *The Latin Beat* and Yolanda Moreno Rivas's *Historia de la música popular mexicana*, which historicize bolero's emergence and migration from Cuba to Mexico City; Mark Pedelty's "The Bolero," which positions the bolero as evocative of Mexican modernity; George Torres's "The *Bolero Romántico*," which examines the musical and lyrical forms and formulae that constitute the bolero romántico; and Jaime Rico Salazar's *Cien años de boleros*, which offers histories as well as brief biographies and discographies of boleristas from throughout the Americas. More recently, Deborah Vargas's analysis of Chelo Silva in "Borderland Bolerista" has moved bolero studies from the Caribbean and Mexico to Greater Mexico and from discussions of race, class, and nationality to the ways in which gender and sexuality norms intersect with or emerge from each of those fields.

blackness of her eyes and the cinnamon of her skin. After the trumpets open with the melody and the percussion engages the 4/4 rhythm, the singer croons:

Que se queda el infinito sin estrellas

Que pierda el ancho mar su inmensidad

Pero el negro de tus ojos que no muera

Y el canela de tu piel se queda igual.[58]

The singer constructs a hypothetical, perhaps postapocalyptic world wherein the environmental beauty lost to forces unremarked in the song fails to affect the singer as would the absence of the woman's dark eyes and cinnamon skin. The lyrical subjunctive tense suggests that the singer must distract his lover from some reality, perhaps migratory departure, that faces each of them. His comparisons to an imagined world of loss take both the listener and the lover into either a hypothetical utopia or a nostalgic remembrance. After a brief pause in the music, the singer breathily and briskly moves into the chorus, perhaps the most memorable part of the song and the part from which Cisneros draws the two lines in the epigraph, bringing both lover and listener into the present moment.

In citing a rendition by María Victoria, however, Cisneros reverses the gendered implications of the sexual conquest suggested in the song. Privileging the intérprete's smooth and sultry voice, Cisneros draws the reader's attention to a particular performance that gives the Mexicana voice and Mexicana subject-position a sense of sexual agency not afforded by traditional narratives of women's roles. Indeed, with her vocal inflections in which the words sometimes dissolve into the sound of trumpets,

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[58] "If infinity were left without stars
If the wide sea should lose its immensity
Just so the blackness of your eyes were not to perish
And your skin would not lose its cinnamon (color)."

sometimes come to a painful halt as though overwhelmed with emotion, Victoria throws herself wholeheartedly into the bolero tradition.[59]

Victoria's passion in this particular song resonates with more than just bolero's sensuousness. The romanticization of dark skin in "Piel Canela" as well as the traversal between utopian and nostalgic landscapes invites comparison to post-revolutionary indigenismo projects designed to promote a mestizo nation by "deracinating Indians, rather than redefining social legitimacy to include Indigenous communities and rectify the deep inequities in Mexican society" (Contreras 24). By the 1950s, Mexican nationalists were forced to confront the legacy of those deep inequities as dispossessed campesinos flocked by the thousands to economic opportunity en El Norte. To identify the performance as Victoria's not only revises the conventional narrative of mestizaje, which posits a sexual relationship between an Indigenous woman and a European man, the archetypal (hi)story being that of the relationship between Malintzin Tenepal (La Malinche) and Hernán Cortés; it also romanticizes the migration plot, giving sexual agency to the singing woman, perhaps on the occasion of her lover's—or, more subversively, her own—departure.

"One Holy Night" takes up each of these themes, but the play of the narrative voice troubles the relegation of indigeneity to some mythic past, a national palimpsest written over in the present by mestizaje. Instead, the story constructs Indigenous land rights and spirituality as sites of enduring struggles poised for future revolutions. The Indigenous presence in this story functions as a means of removing and thereby calling

[59] I have not been able to locate in my research Victoria's rendition of "Piel Canela." This description comes from my familiarity with some of Victoria's other songs and how they fit into the bolero tradition. Nevertheless, the fact that Cisneros cites María Victora points to the latter's significance for the collection. As a signifier of sexuality, Mexicanidad, migration, and social mobility (she hails from Guadalajara, Jalisco, but moved to Mexico City to start her singing career), Victoria best represents the specific contours of bolero on which Cisneros draws in this section.

into question standards of (European) normativity that reinforce narratives of purity and shame, still coded in terms of childhood innocence, in order to delimit women's sexual agency. At the same time the turn to a discourse of Mayan revolution has the potential to create distance, a disidentificatory mode, between the reader and the characters themselves, leaving the reader comfortable in a touristic listening stance. With "One Holy Night," however, such a stance fails to account for the narrator's voice in her telling of the story. Careful attention to her indeterminate play of voice, particularly to its temporal shifts, reveals a deeper correlation between the narrator's sexuality and her "piel canela" than that suggested in the song. In fact, it is her adherence to a Mayan worldview, albeit constructed (the nostalgic past and projected future of "Piel Canela" collapsed into a discursive indigeneity), that centers the narrator and gives her strength in her decisions.

In the beginning of the story, though, we tend to question the narrator's agency, or at the very least her ability to make "good" decisions. She first meets Boy Baby as she is selling cucumbers on the street. After winning her heart, the older man, who claims to be from "an ancient line of Mayan Kings," tells the narrator about the revolution foretold in the stars. He shows her his guns, "rifles and pistols, one rusty musket, a machine gun, and several tiny weapons with mother-of-pearl handles that look like toys," so that she will understand who he is. But, she says, "I didn't want to know" (29). After the narrator's grandmother learns the truth about her granddaughter's forays into Chaq's little room behind Esparza & Sons—that she left the cart there, that Boy Baby had disappeared, and that, on that one holy night, he had impregnated her granddaughter—the elder sends the child back to Mexico, to San Dionisio de Tlaltepango, the girl's mother's hometown.[60]

[60] The narrator's "disgrace," her violation, like that of her mother, serves as the impetus for migration; she must labor in another country to avoid the family's public shame. The story thus inscribes a gendered representation of physical labor into the narratives of economic and national "disgrace" used to characterize the predominantly masculine representations of migrant labor espoused by Mexican nationalists in the 1950s and by anti-immigration propaganda in the twenty-first century.

Though the story refuses to downplay the violence to which young, working-poor girls are exposed in the course of their daily labors, the narrative also remains open to the possibility of subversion by the narrator herself. Despite her ostensible naiveté, the narrator speaks with a clarity of vision beyond her years. Reflecting on her maiden desires, she asserts, "All I know is I didn't want it like that. Not against the bricks or hunkering in somebody's car" (28). Though perhaps before she met Chaq, and even as they courted, the narrator may not have given a thought to how or where her first sexual encounter would take place, she recognizes in hindsight what she did or did not want. This self-conscious reflection reinforces her credibility as a narrator. So we should believe her when she says, "What I like to hear him tell is how he is Chaq, Chaq of the people of the sun, Chaq of the temples" (29); or "I know I was supposed to feel ashamed, but I wasn't ashamed" (30); or "then I couldn't read but only stare at the little black-and-white dots that make up the face that I am in love with" (34). These assertions suggest that the stories Boy Baby told were powerfully persuasive, that the narrator's unrepressed sexual agency relates to how she sees herself fitting into the world created by those stories, and that she continues to embrace the stories Boy Baby told despite his absence. For the narrator, then, the story of her child's conception is not one of shame or guilt; it is itself a sacred text with consequences that have been revolutionary to her if to no one else.

Once we realize the impact of Boy Baby's stories, certain descriptions take on a less elegiac tone (mourning the loss of innocence) and assume one of prophecy, wherein the birth of the narrator's child forecasts the place of mother and child in an impending Mayan revolution. A "wrinkled witch woman . . . rubs [her] belly with jade," indicating that the narrator, presumably willingly, engages in what she at least believes to be traditional Mayan sacred fertility and gestational practices (27). Likewise, while she

hears her grandmother and uncle praying the rosary to their God, the narrator eschews their religious practices for a polytheistic model. When, for example, she "prayed that we [narrator and grandmother] would not meet Boy Baby" when they go to retrieve the pushcart, the tense moves from past to present as she says, "and since the gods listen and are mostly good, Esparza said, yes, a man like that had lived there but was gone" (32). This shift in tense suggests that though the younger, less worldly narrator is the one who said the prayer, the more credible narrator continues to believe that the gods listen.

Finally, bolero's cultural resonances as it migrated from Yucatán to Mexico City and its role in complicating discourses of mexicanidad encroach on a reading of Chaq's culpability that relies on the newspaper clippings his little sister sends to the narrator. The paper features "a picture of him looking very much like stone, police hooked on either arm . . . *on the road to* Las Grutas de Xtacumbilxuna, *the Caves of the Hidden Girl* . . . *eleven female bodies* . . . *the last seven years*" (34). We see represented in the two competing popular media (the bolero and the newspaper) two socially and historically opposed groups, Indigenous peoples seeking political control over the land and national officials violently blocking that control. Discursive dominance in this space thus reflects a competition over a term central to the unfolding of the narrative: truth. That the narrator "couldn't read but only stare" at Chaq's image in the paper could suggest regret, but it could also suggest cynicism at the ideological maneuvers a state media arm could make, maneuvers that delegitimize the narrator's own worldview. By figuring Chaq as a violent assailant of women, the newspaper instills a fear in women of Indigenous men. Thus, in the newspaper clippings from "One Holy Night," gendered violence covers over colonial violence in a revisionary substitution, obscuring both the colonial and the patriarchal practices with which the ideologically driven media operate. In other words, by

representing Chaq as a threat to women's virtue and their lives, the newspaper also demonizes the Indigenous revolutionary project.

Part of the hope of Ixchel, the only name the narrator ever ascribes to herself and an allusion to the Mayan goddess of fertility, is that her femininity, with all of the codes that position entails, could create a path for her own uprising. In concert with the restaging of the gendered codes in Victoria's performance of "Piel Canela," Ixchel's desire for Chaq and his promised revolution troubles the ostensibly authoritative account of Indigenous men or Indigenous spirituality as intrinsically violent. Through her performance of a pocha politics of listening, Ixchel's story delineates ruptures in the newspaper text that belie the nostalgic uses to which indigenismo is put in Mexican nationalist discourses even as it seeks to revise the gender roles available to either Indian or mestiza/o women and men in that very discourse. Her pocha performance, however, also converges with the role of indigenism in Chicana/o nationalist discourses. This alignment is most clearly expressed in Ixchel's migratory patterns: a U.S. citizen born to a Mexican mother out of wedlock, Ixchel returns to Mexico in an allegory of repatriation that directly informs the two stories, "Woman Hollering Creek" and "*Bien* Pretty," that frame the third section. Ixchel, that is, politicizes historia in a move that circumvents mythical or rhetorical indigenism in order to critique the racialist, classed, and gendered assumptions undergirding practices of migration and modernization.

III. Death, Desire and (Te) Dejando en San Antonio

While Ixchel turns myths of both migration and indigenism into a political reality, the characters and singers in the third section, "There Was a Man, There Was a Woman," take this pocha performance of revision and reauthorization to its ultimate incarnation as a feminist Chicana practice that, through the articulation of experience, disrupts

discourses that define and restrict Mexicana and Chicana femininity. Lola Beltrán's reinterpretation of the ranchera "Puñalada Trapera," Cleófilas's reimagining of La Llorona, and Lupe's revision of the Popocatépetl and Ixtaccíhuatl painting each translates Mexicanidad into a category at once articulable and unassimilable.

The gendered inflections of nationalism as expressed in música ranchera, in fact, proscribe the roles that women can play. According to Manuel Peña, cultural nationalism as lo ranchero emerged out of "qualities that are embedded in the twin symbols of the charro and the campesino[:] . . . manliness, self-sufficiency, candor, simplicity, sincerity, and patriotism, or *mexicanismo* (11, italics in original). The nation in the ranchera tradition is thus figured as intrinsically masculine, leaving little room for anything but passive representations of Mexican feminity. Cándida Jáquez explains, for example, that two factors are crucial to understanding the enduring representations of romanticized Mexicanidad in the ranchera: "The first is that . . . a male-centered voice dominates the narrative. The second is that gender relationships are idealized and normalized into a dynamic between male and female lovers, where the male figure frequently becomes the pursuer or wooer and the female figure assumes a passive role as the object of desire" (173). In addition to the figure of passivity that Jáquez rightly identifies, an alternative role for women is that of the traitor, inclined to act against the greater good of the nation, a figuration applied to La Malinche in both Mexican and Chicano nationalist contexts.[61] Notably, Lola Beltrán's role as intérprete aligns her with Malinche, who, in the well-known history of Spanish conquest, served as one of Cortéz's interpreters. But Beltrán's rendering of "Puñalada Trapera" defies easy categorization as treachery. In fact, it calls into question the "naturally" gendered terms of treachery/treason and abandonment.

[61] For a further discussion of women as types in Mexican song, see Herrera-Sobek's history and analysis of feminine archetypes in *The Mexican Corrido: A Feminist Analysis*.

Despite the limited roles to which ranchera ideologically confines women, performers like Lola Beltrán redefined the genre's parameters. After being "discovered" while working as a secretary for Mexican radio station XEW, Beltrán skyrocketed to superstardom, her career paralleling that of "los ídolos" Jorge Negrete and Pedro Infante. Like the male stars, she owed much of her success to the unique timbre and awesome power of her voice; unlike them, Beltrán used her voice to contest rather than assent to generic expectations. In a song like "Puñalada Trapera," for example, Beltrán's feminized performance contains the essence of ranchera even as it hears the song against the traditional grain. When the intérprete begins the soft, deep enunciation of "me estoy muriendo"[62] into the rising crescendo of "de mi suerte,"[63] the performance retains a communal recollection of an idyllic rural past, that which sustains the popularity of ranchera, while revising the gender norms ideologically encoded therein. Though Beltrán may not figure as pocha, her negotiation between mexicanidad and fierce, passionate femininity lays the structural groundwork for the ensuing enactments of pocha/o voice both in the stories and in the final conjunto.

The difference between Beltrán's ranchera style and that of more traditional performers lies in the struggle that ensues between her vocal inflections and the formal stylings inscribed in the song itself. "Puñalada" is written in ¾ time, a typical rhythm of ranchera music which, as in el vals, lends itself to the familiar *tin-tan-tan* beat throughout the song. The melody forms the background to the song's opening, which features the trumpets' harmony. After this instrumental introduction, a brief pause gives way to the vocalist's entrance. The temporary arrest of the music, that space of silence, marks an aporia that invites someone to speak while heightening the listener's anticipation of the

[62] I'm dying
[63] Of my luck

words on the verge of sound. In this case, the silence gives way to "me estoy muriendo." The listener is thus suddenly cast from "time out of time" into an always already present moment established by the present perfect in this first line (Jáquez 171). By the end of this line, the tempo is re-established and the trumpets return to fill the pause after "Y tú, como si nada." In both Méndez's and Beltrán's versions, the opening rhythms manipulate traditional instrumentation to emphasize the temporal inflections of the first lines. For each, there is a timelessness and universality to the performer's subdued assertion, "I'm dying / And you, you don't even care."

Yet each rendition manipulates that timelessness differently, according to the variations in intonation. Méndez's high-pitched, velar style, for instance, creates an elongated sobbing effect, heightening the (male) protagonist's pain; whereas Beltrán's lowering of pitch enables her to sustain fuller inflections, producing a much more aggressive and affirmative effect. This variation also contributes to their enunciation of the lyrics. For example, Beltrán's "y tú" or "qué mal te hice" are clipped, giving her words a sharp edge.[64] Conversely, she extends the final syllable of "suerte" for three full measures, halting intermittently just before the first note in each measure. And on each repetition of "traicionera,"[65] she holds the final note for an additional measure with only one quick pause. Her elongations, so essential to ranchera style, thus sound as though each one gets repeatedly struck by the blow of the puñal only to return stronger and fiercer. Méndez's enunciations, on the other hand, in keeping with his velar tone, draw out and fade into the trumpets or the next verse. His intonation underscores the protagonist's pathos, while Beltrán's lends itself to the singer's strength in the face of death. Where he allows the words to subsume him, she struggles with and controls them.

[64] "and you"; "what harm did I do you"
[65] "traitorous"

The sense of power behind Beltrán's voice, too, bears forcefully upon the meaning of "Puñalada Trapera." Her performance comes to convey her own vexed relationship with its lyrics and with the genre as a whole. One of the reasons that songs written by composers such as Tomás Méndez or José Alfredo Jiménez became popularized as Beltrán's songs is the antagonism with which she handles their lyrics. Where, for instance, Méndez's protagonist succumbs to defeat at the hands of an ineluctably treacherous woman, Beltrán's protagonist struggles to determine why this is happening. When she sings "Me estoy muriendo / Por tu culpa, por tu culpa,"[66] she is actually casting blame on her lover rather than stating a mere fact. In Beltrán's performance nothing is predetermined; both parties maintain relative agency. Conversely, when Méndez's protagonist asks, "Qué mal te hice / que no supiste perdonarme?"[67] the question is merely rhetorical. The speaker assumes that he need not have done anything to harm his lover because she is "naturally" predisposed to treachery; her betrayal is inevitable. In the context of such normalized gender relations, individual agency rests solely with the male—"What did *I* ever do to you, that you couldn't forgive me?"—yet even he is subject to the treacherous inclinations of woman. In countering this deterministic model of gender norms, Beltrán's interpretation creates a space for an oppositional narrative. She vocally manipulates the lyrics to draw out the indeterminacies of the song so that the listener is forced to ask: what was the "stab in the back" that is killing the protagonist and why did it happen?

The storytellers in this section take up this question, responding with acts of pocha voice. Not only do Cleófilas of "Woman Hollering Creek" and Lupe of "*Bien* Pretty" revise the gendered norms of ranchera and, later, of conjunto, they identify the

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[66] "I am dying / for your sins, for your sins"
[67] "What did I do to you / that you could not know forgiveness?"

various transformations that mexicanidad undertakes in its migrations across the border (and back). For Cleófilas, the tale of La Llorona comes to signify her association with mexicanidad once she finds herself alone in Seguín. It becomes her connection to an absent homeland and mother, on one hand, and to the threatening possibility of a future with her abusive husband, Juan Pedro, on the other. For Lupe Arredondo, "Mexico" and mexicanidad are signified in objects and performances that she can grasp, define, and, usually, purchase. In her relationship with and subsequent abandonment by Flavio Munguía Galindo, the embodiment of Mexico for her, she must revise not only her conception of Mexico, the metonym for which is her painting of Popocatépetl and Ixtaccíhuatl, but also her understanding of herself as a Chicana in relationship to mexicanidad, both objectified and experienced.

In its response to the epigraph as well as in its intradiegetic allusions, "Woman Hollering Creek" draws on the interplay between popular culture and communal experience, though sometimes distinctions between the two are difficult to hear. Sonia Saldívar-Hull argues, for example, that "the culture the women shared included communal lessons learned at the local movie house from telenovelas. Ultimately, it is the media that construct a version of Mexican womanhood that informs the vision that for Cleófilas contains the true essence of love" (108). This may be true for Cleófilas, whose lack of experience impels supplantation and substitution, but to give all of the women of Monclova wholly over to commercial productions of popular culture is to deny them the legitimacy of their own experiences.

On the contrary, lived experience emerges in the narrative as part of a dialectical relationship with cultural productions; neither one nor the other wholly constructs Mexican womanhood. This dialectical process is narrated as a speaking public populated by women of various generations. In the following passage, Cleófilas's voice melds with

that of the third-person narrator, whose voice, like the protagonist's, resonates with the telenovelas: "*Seguin, Tejas*. A nice sterling ring to it. The tinkle of money. She would get to wear outfits like the women on the *tele*, like Lucía Méndez. And have a lovely house, and wouldn't Chela be jealous." The question, "and wouldn't Chela be jealous," sets up the mode of communal oral practice in which the various subjects engage in the succeeding paragraphs: *chisme*, or gossip. Just before the statement "that's what they say," in the next paragraph, the reader shifts from one interlocutor to another, whose perspective is neither that of an omniscient narrator nor that of Cleófilas. "That's what they say" authorizes the new speaker to convey information because she has heard the news from some credible source, perhaps other women in the community, perhaps Cleófilas and Juan Pedro. Perhaps the speaker relies simply on local knowledge of such cross-border betrothals. Nevertheless, the unmitigated optimism of this speaker's inflection indicates that she may be one of Cleófilas's peers, perhaps Chela herself. Even in the face of avowed economic exigencies such as foregoing a long engagement so that Juan Pedro can get back to work, the speaker continues to imagine the same material promise of el otro lado that Cleófilas does. Both hold to a belief in the promise of the United States and Juan Pedro as its representative. Imagining the couple riding off in the groom's new pickup truck, the speaker delightedly asks, "Did you see it?" Juan Pedro's truck serves as the material anchor for the idealistic future she envisions, enabling her later to presume that the same newness that characterizes the truck will continue to color the newlyweds' life together: "Why not? He can afford it" (45).

In the third paragraph of this section another shift occurs; the narrative voice moves once again, this time into a community of older women, perhaps Cleófilas's madrinas or tías. The generational difference between this group and the previous speakers reveals a gap that can be narrowed by sharing experience. The conversational

"well, you'll see" introduces a set of interlocutors whose voices are tempered by experience. The next sentence indicates that this new speaker must allay some concern, perhaps financial, about the wedding. Though she cannot afford to buy the dress, the speaker appears to say, Cleófilas "has always been so good with her sewing machine." This seasoned group of speakers recognizes that becoming a woman involves more than just newness. Some aspects of the transformation are as old as gossip itself, as one speaker implies when she says, "And without even a mama to advise her" (45). Indeed, whether Cleófilas would heed the advice or not, her mother's absence marks an advisorial vacuum that comes to be filled by telenovelas and romance novels.

The group of older women thus represents a source of knowledge outside the world of telenovelas. As Yolanda Broyles-González explains, "Since ancient times in what is now the Americas women elders have passed on to others like them a knowledge of the past as a tool for the present and future" (200). In other words, the statement "and without even a mother to advise her" suggests that while popular entertainment maintains a certain currency among the women, young and old, of Monclova, consejo, dichos, and chisme provide a localized transmission of lived experience that inflects how the women interpret cultural productions. Whereas Cleófilas reads the movies and telenovelas as both entertaining and didactic, the older generation furnishes an embodied wisdom, through chisme, that contradicts the lessons that popular culture teaches. Like Beltrán's performance of the ranchera, the women's chisme irrupts the discourses of Mexican womanhood disseminated in the telenovelas.

Once in Texas, left without even maternal substitutes, Cleófilas turns to an oral legend of another cultural icon of motherhood: La Llorona. When her romantic ideal of married life inspired by the telenovelas and romance novels fails to materialize, Cleófilas hears not the voices of the Mexican women of her hometown, but that of the legendary

Weeping Woman. The traditional legend of La Llorona, often told to young children as a cautionary tale and behavioral corrective, recounts the tale of a woman who drowns her children for reasons that vary depending on the storyteller. Her penance is to weep and wail next to the body of water for eternity. According to Domino Perez, "Renderings of this [traditional] type usually position or promote La Llorona as selfish, vain, vengeful, whorish, and, worst of all, a bad mother, while excusing or ignoring the behavior of the man" (23). By killing her children, La Llorona exemplifies the treachery of a woman who fails to fulfill her maternal destiny, which translates into an active refusal to participate in her own repression.

As Saldívar-Hull observes, though, Cisneros transforms "a tale of male dominance and female submission and treachery, the traditional tale of La Llorona, into a story of strong women who, in solidarity with one another, transform the powerless lament into a battle cry" (106). For Cleófilas the realization that the creek's call might be a rallying cry, a yell of resistance and joy rather than of "pain or rage," comes only when she assumes the role of speaker. In another moment of communal oral performance, Cleófilas recounts for her father and brothers the Tarzan-like grito of the Chicana, Felice, who rescues her from Juan Pedro's abuse as they go across Woman Hollering Creek: "But then again, Felice was like no woman she'd ever met. Can you imagine, when we crossed the *arroyo* she just started yelling like a crazy" (Cisneros 56). The shift here from third-person limited to first person inclusive indicates that the story of Cleófilas's rescue is actually part of a narrative enclosed within the metanarrative act of oral performance. The last lines of the text indicate that chisme, telling stories or relaying information about someone else, converges into historia, relating one's own life story, as Cleófilas begins to identify with Felice. "Then Felice began laughing again," the narrative concludes, "but it wasn't Felice laughing. It was gurgling out of [Cleófilas's] own throat, a long ribbon of

laughter, like water" (56). In her identification with the joy, or felicidad, of La Gritona, the storyteller realizes the power of her own voice to transform abuse and anger into laughter. Her laughter literally in the faces of her father and brothers suggests her ability to speak from her own experience even against male-authored legends and commodified fantasies. Cleófilas's enactment of pocha voicing thus occurs, like Beltrán's transformation of the gender constraints of ranchera, in a transformation of the legend of La Llorona from one of constraint to one of empowerment.

In the collection's final story, "*Bien* Pretty," Cisneros, along with Flaco Jiménez, leaves us in San Antonio, Texas, rather than Mexico. Lupe Arredondo's performance of pocha storytelling makes clear her distance and difference from the official discourses of Mexico we have encountered in *Cri-cri*, bolero, and ranchera. Like the performances to which Cisneros alludes throughout the epigraphs, Lupe's performance problematizes monolithic conceptions of mexicanidad even as she affirms their influence over chicanidad. Yet Lupe must also undergo a process of disidentification with the material forms of mexicanidad she romanticizes—objects removed, from concrete historical and social forces—before she can become aware of herself as resonant with them. The story thus constructs Lupe as an allegory of chicanidad that exists in dialectical relationship with mexicanidad; when we confront Mexico as imagined nation, when it simultaneously succeeds and fails to conform to our expectations, "*Bien* Pretty" suggests, we can begin to reimagine the contours of Chicana/o nationalisms.

In "*Bien* Pretty" Lupe relates her meeting with, attraction to, and abandonment by Flavio and her subsequent confrontation with her own performative mexicanidad, thus reversing the romantic relationship with Mexico formulated in both "One Holy Night" and "Woman Hollering Creek." Here, "Mexico" is embodied in the male migrant who forces Lupe to confront the tangled web of identity that constitutes her chicanidad. In

contradistinction to “Ay Te Dejo,” which as a parody of quintessentially working-class, migrant, and masculine mexicanidad/pochismo finds its best character representation in Flavio, Lupe must determine the nature of her own Mexican/pocha identity absent any of those traits. Conjunto, the story thus suggests, represents just one variety of pocha/o voicing. Indeed, Lupe, whose class position is a bit more ambiguous than that of conjunto, performs a pocha politics in her attempts to visually recreate mexicanidad through a painting of Popo and Ixta.

In the early pages of the story, Lupe narrates that she, like the owners of her temporary San Antonio home, often locates “her” mexicanidad in objects, romantic and historic, that come to stand in for Mexico. After moving from Northern California to San Antonio to teach art classes at the local community center, she meets Flavio Munguía when he comes to exterminate the massive cockroaches in the house that “belongs to Irasema Izaura Coronado, a famous Texas poet who carries herself as if she is directly descended from Ixtaccíhuatl or something” (139). While Coronado and her husband are away on a Fulbright scholarship in Nayarit, Lupe, whose teaching job is supposed to be temporary, house-sits for them, literally inhabiting their “authentically” Mexican abode. Coronado’s “authentic” mexicanidad lies not only in her regal Aztec manner but also in her possessions, with which Lupe shares the space. The protagonist-narrator lists an inventory that includes, among other things, “(8) Oaxacan black pottery pieces / signed Diego Rivera monotype . . . star-shaped piñata / (5) strings of red chile lights / antique Spanish shawl . . . replica of the goddess Coatlicue . . . Frida Kahlo altar / punched tin Virgen de Guadalupe chandelier / bent twig couch with Mexican sarape cushions . . . (2) identical sets of vintage Talavera Mexican dishware . . . [and a] death mask of Pancho Villa with mouth slightly open” (139–40). Though as a storyteller with the privilege of hindsight, the narrator Lupe critiques the veneer of Mexican authenticity to point out that

underneath it all "there were, as well, the roaches," the character Lupe accepts the kind of authenticity this inventory purports to express (140). We know she accepts it when she asks Flavio to pose as a model for the Popo and Ixta piece she had been thinking of painting. As she gazes at the exterminator, she thinks, "you might be just the Prince Popo I've been looking for with that face of a sleeping Olmec, the heavy Oriental eyes, the thick lips and wide nose, that profile carved from onyx" (144). In keeping with her understanding of mexicanidad as an object like Coronado's possessions, Lupe imagines Flavio as a museum piece, as pure spectacle stripped of humanity and removed from a living context.

Cisneros highlights Lupe's objectification and dehistoricization by offering an intertextual association of Flavio with Indigenous Mexico. Specifically, she places before his acrostic poem, "Tin Tan Tan," which immediately precedes "*Bien* Pretty," an epigraph of the traditional song, "El Abandonado." The song in of itself speaks more to a Mexican nationalist ranchera tradition than to indigeneity; however, readers familiar with the song will notice that it has occurred previously in the collection, in the story "Eyes of Zapata." In fact, the narrator Inés remembers Zapata himself singing the refrain of "El Abandonado," remarking in an address to the absent Zapata, "You used to be *tan chistoso*. *Muy bonachón*, *muy bromista*. Joking and singing off-key when you had your little drinks. *Tres vicios ten y los tengo muy arraigados; de ser borracho, jugador, y enamorado*" (89).[68] Though Cisneros prefaces "Tin Tan Tan" with the opening lines of "El Abandonado" rather than the chorus that her fictionalized Zapata sings (lines that manifest the song's satirical content), to use the same song in conjunction with Flavio's poem links the poet not only to Indigenous Mexico, but also to the unfulfilled promises of

[68] "I have three vices and those deeply rooted; being drunk, gambling, and womanizing."

the Revolution. Unlike Lupe, who dehistoricizes Flavio as a representation of "the" indigenous Mexican, Cisneros represents Flavio as an actor in a history of dispossession.

As such, when Flavio (who writes under the pseudonym Rogelio Velasco) addresses his poem to L-U-P-I-T-A, we are to recognize the manifest dialogue with Lupe Arredondo of "*Bien* Pretty" as well as the latent associations with the symbol of La Virgen de Guadalupe, for which Lupe and Lupita are diminutives. Flavio has not been abandoned by Lupe Arredondo (as we know from her story, he leaves her); instead, the poem expresses his abandonment by a nation under the banner of Guadalupe, protectrix of Mexico's Indigenous peoples.[69] Velasco/Munguía says in the penultimate stanza, for instance, "They say of the poet and madman we all have a little [a line he will repeat to Lupe Arredondo]. Even my life I would give for your exquisite treasures. But poor me. Though others may lure you with jewels and riches, all I can offer is this humble measure" (136). Cisneros's deft weaving of intertextual relationships creates of this ostensibly romantic line a deprecation of a developmentalist system that delimits the possibility of a contemporary, working-class, Native poet, a system that, instead, forces him into exile as a migrant laborer.

The story of Lupe and Flavio's meeting, both narratively and allegorically, is at bottom a story of a clash of worldviews premised on their respective (socially conditioned) practices of listening to the interplay of romance and indigenism. Thus, when Flavio leaves Lupe abandoned in Torres Taco Haven to return to "compromises," or commitments, in Mexico, his assertion that "[t]here is no other remedy," becomes implicitly an assertion of his agency. His return migration, leaving Lupe in San Antonio,

[69] Although the appearance of La Virgen to Juan Diego on the hill at Tepeyac has been described as an Indigenization of Catholicism, Guillermo Bonfil Batalla also points out that guadalupanismo was used by Creole elites in early movements for Mexican independence to achieve the twin goals of claiming (Spanish and mestizo) indigeneity in the Americas and eliding the specific religious practices of Indigenous peoples in the nineteenth century (95).

thus becomes a re-enactment of the abandonment he articulates in the poem, except this time, he controls the terms of departure. Flavio's control over this decision also places in relief Lupe's romanticized image of him as "lo indio." The consummate teacher, supporter, and activist, Lupe sees in Flavio someone to care for, to speak for, and, ultimately, to represent in her painting of Popo and Ixta. Disillusioned and separated from commitments both filial and national, Flavio sees in Lupe someone who will abandon him should he not leave first. When, for instance, Lupe critiques Flavio's clothing—a Lacrosse shirt and Reeboks—suggesting that his fashion identifies him as a "product of American imperialism," Flavio responds simply and, for Lupe, infuriatingly, "I don't have to dress in a sarape and sombrero to be Mexican . . . I *know* who *I* am" (151). Indeed, in contradistinction to Lupe, Flavio eschews symbols as a means of discerning his Mexicanidad. As his poem suggests, his faith in national symbolism has been tested too many times.

It is her relationship with Flavio, however, that tests Lupe's faith in the shared recognition of symbols that defines belonging and, in turn, identity for her. In comments like the one above, Lupe assumes that Flavio shares her recognition of Mexican indigeneity as a re-presentation of an ambiguously past style, a nostalgic evocation of a rural life-way that defines Flavio according to the assumption that his identity is not coeval or coincident with hers despite their intense relationship.

Allegorically, Lupe's relationship with Flavio illustrates the disjunctures and assumptions governing Chicana/o nationalism's relationships with indigeneity, assumptions made even more manifest/audible in the intercontextual encounter between Chicanidad and Mexicanidad through contemporary migration. That is, insofar as Lupe Arredondo is named for a figure—La Virgen de Guadalupe—who has heralded and represented multiple national(ist) movements, Cisneros encourages a reading of Lupe's

romantic imagination as an allegory for a contemporary Chicana/o nationalism in relation to mexicanidad, Movimiento-era nationalism, and transnational immigrant imaginaries. Though the story begins with her recollections of Flavio, a series of temporal shifts allows Lupe to relate how she ended up in San Antonio. Originally from northern California, she recounts her experiences as an active member of the Chicano student movement. Explaining her activist record through the introduction of her best comadre, Beatriz, "a criminal lawyer by day, an Aztec dance instructor by night," Lupe says, "Beatriz and I go back a long way. Back to the grape-boycott demonstrations in front of the Berkeley Safeway. And I mean the *first* grape strike" (141). In addition to Beatriz, Lupe had spent many of these activist years with her partner, Eddie. Though during their relationship, the two refine their mutual conception of Chicanidad (a conception that takes on a decidedly transnational bent for Eddie), Lupe recounts that part of her motivation for leaving the Bay Area is Eddie's abandonment of her for a white, blonde "financial consultant for Merrill Lynch" (142). Cisneros captures in this description a moment of transition, where one-time students activists enter the 1980s, "Decade of the Hispanic," with a recollection of the struggle, but also with an awareness of the possibility for inclusion into U.S. narratives of success. Eddie allegorizes a contradiction in Chicano nationalism that suggests that embracing a model of success for which, arguably, the Civil Rights battles were fought (but which nevertheless entrenches success in an enduring neo-liberalism) means abandoning collective struggle altogether.

When Lupe meets Flavio, her impressions of him have certainly been shaped by each of these experiences in addition to her plastic conception of Indigenous Mexico. His abandonment of her, however, carves a pychic space for her own awareness and renewal. Her commodified conception of indigeneity no longer carries the cultural or psychic power it once held for her, creating a vacuum in her worldview that she must struggle to

fill. Returning to the painting, Lupe translates this awareness into a revision of the assumptions with which both she and Flavio met and desired each other. She decides to switch the positions of Popo and Ixta, so that the "warrior" becomes the sleeping volcano, while the "princess" sits over him. "Of course," she explains, "I had to make some anatomical adjustments in order to simulate the geographical silhouettes. I think I'm going to call it *El Pipi del Popo*" (163). The revision speaks volumes in its revelation of how Lupe positions herself symbolically. By troubling the gendering of symbolic national discourses such that national romance does not depend on the passivity of a Native woman, Guadalupe recasts her (symbolic) self. No longer the symbol to be mobilized, tread upon, or abandoned, Lupe becomes an active participant in the re-construction of national symbols, one who celebrates not only the local but the present as indicated in her closing words, "Today. Hurray. Hurray!" (165).

Lupe's politics of listening in this story depicts a break with romanticized and objectified mexicanidad (notably, Lupe is the only character in this discussion who does not return to Mexico) as well as a critical stance toward Alurista's vision of Chicanidad. Though, out of the break, she authors a revision of her recently-shed plastic conceptions of Indigenous Mexico, the collection renders nebulous the political utility of that conception for Native people either in the United States or in Mexico. It suggests that only by recognizing the dissonance between the ahistorical indigenist myths promoted as the foundation for Chicano nationalism and the contemporary lives of Indigenous Mexicans on both sides of the border can broader, more inclusive conceptions of Chicana/o nationalisms begin to emerge. However, in the multiple forms of abandonment Lupe experiences, the story narrates the failures of those features of Chicana/o ideology without offering possible correctives.

As a final structural act of sonic pocha politics, Cisneros concludes the text with her own "¡tan *TÁN!*" that signifies an end that continues to interrupt nationalistic discourses even as it links directly to them. Cisneros moves the collection along a trajectory of firmly entrenched Mexican nationalist song traditions, only to identify breaks in "the" traditions themselves and, ultimately, to turn to the pocha/o ironies of the Tejano conjunto. As a whole, this trajectory maps the ideological and political terrain that pocha/o voice traverses, a terrain marked by multiple borders and remembrances. The songs, then, do not belong to a homeland that, as Cisneros describes it in her novel *Caramelo*, "doesn't exist anymore. That never existed. A country I invented. Like all emigrants caught between here and there" (434). The homeland belongs to the songs, and it is listening and the imaginaries that listening entails that constitute the preconditions for pocha/o politics. And pocha/o politics, in turn, serve as a critical precondition, or staging ground, for alternative forms of Chicana/o nationalism that can encompass feminist, queer, and Indigenous alliances and identities.

Chapter Three: Soundtracks of Safety in Sherman Alexie's *Reservation Blues*

In the final scene of Spokane and Coeur d'Alene author Sherman Alexie's first novel, *Reservation Blues*, three of the five characters who formed the inter-tribal band Coyote Springs leave the Spokane Indian Reservation singing with Big Mom's protective "shadow horses," "we are alive, we'll keep living." The narrator, too, voices over the scene, "They were alive; they'd keep living" (306). Over the course of the novel, they have seen the Mississippi delta blues legend Robert Johnson arrive at the crossroads in Wellpinit on the Spokane Reservation; they have taken the advice of his guitar to start a rock and blues band; they have toured successfully to other local reservations and even won a battle of the bands competition in Seattle. But when in New York City, performing in a Cavalry Records studio for producers George Wright, Philip Sheridan, and Mr. Armstrong—all named for nineteenth-century Indian "pacifiers"—Coyote Springs is unable to perform. They lose the contract and, thus, their chance for success. Upon return to the Spokane Indian Reservation, they are shunned by the community and forced to "relocate" to the city of Spokane.

The novel thus appears to end despairingly with a wake for one character, Junior Polatkin, who has committed suicide, a stereotypical portrait of another character, Victor Joseph, who has resigned himself to a wandering, alcoholic life, and the exile of Thomas Builds-the-Fire and Chess and Checkers Warm Water. In a sardonic reversal of *Ceremony*'s depiction of Tayo's move to the center, Alexie's text seems to equivocate on the possibility of a decolonial imaginary in 1992, the quincentenary anniversary of Columbus's arrival in the New World and almost half a century from Tayo's journey to the kiva. What his text cannot convey, however, the novel's soundtrack does. Written by Alexie and Colville singer-songwriter-producer, Jim Boyd, the *Reservation Blues*

soundtrack was produced in Boyd's Inchelium, Washington Thunderwolf Productions studio, countering the dangerous colonial site of Cavalry Records with a safe space for Native collaboration and production, a space that effects the potential not only for Native survival but also for Native success.

Indeed, in spite of the insistence on Thomas, Checkers, and Chess's survival in the last scene, criticism of *Reservation Blues* frequently emphasizes the hopelessness of the novel as a whole. Fellow Spokane author and critic Gloria Bird, for instance, characterizes the novel as an "exaggeration of despair," writing in her review of that title, "Alexie's narrator . . . doesn't appear to recognize that the representations of Indians he presents to a non-native audience are also 'safer,' because they are dressed in America's favorite subjects when it comes to Indians: tragedy and despair" (51). More recently, Scott Andrews takes up this criticism of the novel, determining ultimately that Alexie "settles for survival rather than imagining success for its [the novel's] protagonists" (137).

To accuse Alexie of a failure of imagination, however, is, first, implicitly to define success according to white standards of cultural popularity that *Reservation Blues* goes to great lengths to criticize and, second, to limit the form of the novel to the silence of the text despite its insistent call to listen. That call comes in many forms, not least of which is the promotion of the soundtrack on the book's marketing page on Alexie's website, fallsapart.com. The soundtrack appears in two places on the "Reservation Blues" page, first under "Related" items and then in the listing of songs. Though no explicit reference is made to the soundtrack's availability in compact disc format within the text, the novel does include as chapter epigraphs, Alexie's lyrics to ten of the songs featured on the soundtrack, including "Reservation Blues," "Treaties," "Indian Boy Love Song," "Father and Farther," "My God Has Dark Skin," "Big Mom," "Urban Indian Blues,"

"Small World," and "Wake." These songs, which appear narratively as Coyote Springs's songs, join Robert Johnson's "Crossroads Blues" and "Preachin' Blues (Up Jumped the Devil)" as audible and accessible recorded music. Though many critics, including Andrews as well as P. Jane Hafen, have treated the rock and blues traditions of the novel more generally, none have examined the *Reservation Blues* soundtrack as either an audible extension of an American Indian performance of the African American blues tradition or as an extension of the possibilities afforded to the Native characters in the novel.

In this chapter, I do treat the *Reservation Blues* soundtrack in those terms, examining its production, circulation, reception and the extent to which it draws on the African American blues tradition in order to comment on the novel's self-conscious performance of (inter-)textuality. The novel proper, that is, relies on a certain conception of postmodern textuality that enables it, on one hand, to revive nineteenth-century U.S. Army figures like Wright, Sheridan, and Custer (as Mr. Armstrong), and, on the other, to dramatize the ways in which contemporary Native peoples are inscribed, proscribed, and described by the texts of popular culture. The scripting of Native identities on television and in New Age depictions of Native spirituality works hand in hand with historical scripts to thwart the possibility of success for Native people in the novel. Alexie certainly uses his own practices of inscription to parody that facile conception of textuality; however, the novel also evidences a tension between textuality and audibility in its almost compulsive inclusion of audible musical forms and calls to listen. To respond to those calls, to listen to the soundtrack as the "end" of the novel and thereby to move beyond the confines of the text enables a recognition of the contours of "safe" and "dangerous" Native cultural expressions that heightens Alexie's critique of popular culture precisely because he inhabits its forms in order to encourage readers to listen.

Reservation Blues ultimately denaturalizes the historical narratives of declension and postmodern narratives of liberated meanings that circulate in Indian education and popular culture to provide a theoretical commentary on the effects of both History and Postmodernism, which work in tandem, in the form of a specifically Indian blues tradition that has everything to do with how to listen for Native experience.

I. "I HAD MY TONGUE CUT OUT BY THE BLACK ROBES / BUT I KNOW I'LL SPEAK AGAIN"[70]

As "My God Has Dark Skin" opens, the electric guitar growls right before Jim Boyd starts to bend its strings, feverishly working the fret. Though the instrumentation in this song also features a rhythm guitar and drums, the electric guitar dominates, giving the song overall an ominous tone. As Boyd sings the first lines, "My braids were cut off in the name of Jesus / To make me look so white," his usually sonorous, crystalline voice also growls, picking up where the electric guitar leaves off. Though the guitar's alternate growl and scream never back down, seeming to buck like Robert Johnson's guitar bucks out of Victor's hands in the Cavalry Records studio, Boyd's voice returns to his usual clarity, sounding even a bit strained, as he sings the chorus:

> Well, I've got news for you
> But I'm not sure where to begin
> Yeah, I've got news for you
> My God has dark skin.

Boyd's control over the guitar as over his voice resonates with the song's content, which describes the disciplinary tactics of Catholic missionaries seeking to de-Indianize their students, to make them "safe" for the civilizing project of settler-colonization. "My God

[70] Each of the sub-heading titles for this chapter comes from the song lyrics available textually through the chapter epigraphs and audibly on the soundtrack. This is from the second verse of "My God Has Dark Skin."

Has Dark Skin," though, casts the terms of safety and danger into question, particularly in the repetition of the chorus, where Boyd vocally establishes the terms of his own safety in defiance of the "name of Jesus" and "the blackrobes."

That Boyd controls the terms of "safety" and "danger" in this song about Catholic missionary education emphasizes the extent to which the novel itself is also self-referentially about the formal and informal routes of education that depend on those discourses. For instance, in a rejoinder to Bird and other critics who lament Alexie's refusal to include Spokane traditions and ceremonies, Alexie maintains in a 1997 interview with John Purdy, "We shouldn't be writing about traditions, we shouldn't be writing about our spiritual practices. Not in the ways in which some people are doing it. Certainly, if you're writing a poem or a story about a spiritual experience you had, you can do it. But you also have to be aware that it's going to be taken and used in ways that you never intended for it to be. I think it's dangerous and that's really why I write about day-to-day life" (15-16). The two Spokane authors' uses of the terms "safe" and "dangerous" begs the question: safe or dangerous for whom and according to whom? Clearly, in context, Bird's comment indicates that tragedy and despair are "safer" for non-Native consumption because they are themes that adhere to the dominant trope of the Vanishing American, or at least the silent Indian. For Alexie, on the other hand, allowing non-Native readers into ceremonial practices the way, for instance, Silko lets us into the sand painting ceremony, can serve to reinforce another pan-Indian stereotype: the spiritual, ecological, New Age image of Indianness. Both, as Gerald Vizenor argues, render "*indians* . . . the actual absence—the simulations of the tragic primitive" (vii). The two "safe" and "dangerous" discourses work hand in hand as a narrative of Native absence serves, paradoxically, to offer extant traditions up for grabs to non-Native spiritual seekers.

Notably, "safe" and "dangerous" are also terms used to describe the implementation of Indian boarding school education, where "safe" practices were typically those associated with what John Troutman describes as "the cultural palate of a very specific whiteness—a whiteness defined by Victorian moorings and entertainments" (115). To inculcate such "safe" practices into students and thereby prepare them for "proper" U.S. citizenship, formal routes of education *for* Indians served to police the slippage into "dangerous" cultural practices such as speaking a native/Native language, engaging in tribal dances and singing, or participating in potlatches and "give-aways" and thereby demonstrating their lack of "selfishness." After all, selfishness, according to allotment policy author, Henry Dawes, "is at the bottom of civilization" (qtd. in Troutman 7). Creek scholar of American Indian education K. Tsianina Lomawaima adds that in white institutional settings, "safe" and "dangerous" became ways of classifying not just cultural expression, but cultural difference:

> Federal tolerance of certain Indian "traits" did not go far. Complete intolerance was the norm applied to non-Christian religious expression, or to "dangerously" different economic, political, or social beliefs or practices (such as marriage rules). The tolerance extended only to difference perceived to be "safe" or "innocent." "Safe" difference included the production of arts and crafts, the recording of "tales" classified as mythical or fictional, and the preparation of Native foods (as long as they did not require subversively different, outlawed, or competitive economies, such as buffalo hunting, gill netting of salmon, or harvesting of "wild" foods such as acorns on white-owned lands). (428)

Lomawaima's list of "safe" versus "dangerous" Indian difference documents the extent to which cultural expression was policed and contained in boarding schools, day schools, and vocational schools.

All of these education considerations come to bear on the exchange between Bird and Alexie insofar as they are using the same terms, certainly, but also because of their mutual concern with the political and pedagogical effects of the novel on its readership,

whether Native or non-Native. The sense of urgency in their exchange, in the question of safety or danger of Alexie's portrayal of Indianness, emerges from an anxiety about both what and how the book teaches its Native and non-Native readers.[71] As a self-referential and meta-discursive educational critique, Alexie includes both formal and informal methods of Native education. Formal education for the characters in *Reservation Blues*, as "My God Has Dark Skin" suggests, takes the forms of Catholic boarding schools (for Victor as well as Luke Warm Water, Chess and Checkers's father), Catholic churches (especially for Chess and Checkers, but also evident in Father Arnold's dream of the Whitmans' black box), public high school (about which little is said except that it fostered the basketball talents of Thomas's father, Samuel Builds-the-Fire), and college (for Junior). Informal routes of education, however, convey lessons about Indianness in the narrative and on the reservation much more thoroughly, and they tend to do so through filmic and televisual transmission. According to James Cox, for instance, popular culture as disseminated in television and film in particular, "literally occupies and dominates Alexie's fictional Spokane Reservation and the imaginations of his characters" (146). In this way, popular culture functions to police Native cultural expression and define "safe" and "dangerous" forms of Indianness, thus continuing in everyday practice and in the homes and imaginations of Alexie's characters the "disciplining" and surveillance begun in the boarding schools in the nineteenth century.

The formal, or institutional, routes of education depicted in the novel, particularly those of the Catholic Church, adhere to the discipline-oriented model of eradicating cultural alterity that Lomawaima outlines. Thus, in the chapter that follows the epigraphic lyrics for "My God Has Dark Skin," readers encounter the ways in which the "civilizing"

[71] Indeed, how to teach *Reservation Blues* is a concern frequently cited by critics. See, for instance, Ron McFarland's "Teaching Sherman Alexie's *Reservation Blues*" and Sean Teuton's *Red Land, Red Power* (2008).

stories missionaries, "blackrobes," and priests tell haunt the memories and dreams of both the Native and white characters. One of the most pronounced incidents in this regard occurs in Victor Joseph's memory of the Mission School to which his parents would send him for the summer. Illustrating the policies of "domestic" training inculcated into young Native students as a model simultaneously of an industrial work ethic and Euro-American cleanliness, Victor's memory begins as he mops the floor of the mission. While mopping the floor, the young Victor, who missed being away from home, allows himself to get lost in memories of "picking huckleberries with his family . . . [and] climbing trees with his friends, other Indian boys allowed to stay on the reservation." Lost in reverie, Victor's musings are interrupted by the priest yelling his name. Victor, unable to contain his fright, accidentally spills the mop-water and tries frantically to clean it up. The priest, seizing on Victor's fear, continues to shout until, finally, in a more subdued tone, he offers to help Victor clean up the watery mess. When the young Victor finally begins to feel at ease, the priest rubs his "newly shaved head," remarking, "*It's a shame we had to cut your hair . . . You are such a beautiful boy*" (148). As Victor smiles up at him, the priest bends down to kiss Victor "full and hard on the mouth" (148). Victor was nine years old.

The appearance of this story about Victor's past proves jarring even in this chapter so dominated by dream sequences and storied memories. Indeed, it is jarring precisely because there are no narrative cues as to whether or not Victor's story occurs in dream, in memory, or in story. It just appears, couched between Chess and Thomas's conversation about the place of the church on the reservation and in Indian life on one hand and Checkers's journal entry about her infatuation with Father Arnold, the priest on the Spokane Reservation. Though it could serve as a bridge between the two forms—dialogue and journal entry—Victor's memory/dream sequence also positions him in

opposition to Checkers and Chess, whose Catholic faith endures throughout the novel. Implicitly, Victor's memory leads him to side with Thomas, who refuses to see the value in an institution "that killed so many Indians" (166). But more importantly, it illustrates the stakes of Victor's decision to go with Coyote Springs into Seattle. The depiction of his Mission School experience, that is, begins with the line, "Victor was a hundred miles from home," suggesting that removal from his home, family, and friends, in a word, his reservation, makes possible his molestation at the hands of the priest. In the context of the narrative, the only other times Victor has left the reservation have been to claim his father's dead body in Phoenix and to retrieve his best friend Junior from college in Oregon. As opposed to the Mission School experience, in which he had no say in his removal, both of those trips were undertaken as conscious decisions to recognize and cohere kinship ties. Though the other members of the band, Junior excepted, give Victor little credit, the context of this memory/dream as Coyote Springs spends the night in Thomas's blue van in Seattle, suggests that Victor would not have been so quick to leave home did he not believe that it would be in the interest of maintaining some form of kinship—perhaps even that emblematized in the band, which calls to mind nineteenth-century forms of Spokane social organization.

In another moment of nineteenth-century recall, Father Arnold, who is plagued by his awareness of the legacy of his office as a Catholic priest among Native peoples, dreams of another form of "disciplinary" control exercised by the Protestant missionaries, Narcissa and Marcus Whitman. The Whitmans are of particular historical relevance in the intermontane plateau region as they came, with a group of missionaries from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, to settle and establish Whitman's Mission among the Cayuse in Fort Vancouver, Oregon in 1836. Other missionaries from their party served the Spokanes, Coeur d'Alenes, Colvilles, and Nez

Perces, but the Whitmans assumed a singular importance in the region when they were attacked and killed by a group of Cayuse who had become disgruntled at the steady flow of white immigration and attendant dispppropriation of Cayuse lands. According to Robert H. Ruby and John A. Brown's *The Spokane Indians: Children of the Sun* (1970), the causes for the Whitman Massacre, which took place November 29, 1847, were detailed by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions as follows:

> (1) The large white immigration of 1843, which passed by it [the mission] on the Oregon Trail, and was soon followed by others; (2) the death [murder] of one of the Indians, Elijah Hedding [son of Walla Walla chief Peupeumoxmox], killed on a trip [trading expedition] to California; (3) the Indians' belief that [Marcus] Whitman was more interested in ministering to whites than to them, particularly as regards physical needs resulting from the measles epidemic in the fall of 1847; (4) rivalries growing out of conflicting claims of Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries; and finally, (5) lies spread by half bloods that Whitman was poisoning the Indians to get their land and horses. (77).

Alexie not only revives the Whitmans in Father Arnold's dream sequence, he revives the rumors of their missionary tactics.

In Father Arnold's dream, the priest demands that his Indian parishioners listen to him, to his sermons, to his teaching. But they refuse. Instead, "[t]hey talked among themselves, laughed at secret jokes. Some even prayed in their own languages, in their own ways. Eagle feathers raised to the ceiling, pipes smoked, sweetgrass and sage burned" (*Reservation Blues* 164). In short, they enacted all of the "dangerous" markers of cultural difference that Lomawaima lists, and Father Arnold, unable to contain their difference, to effectively yet peacefully preach to them the Christian teachings, sits down defeated. Just then, the Whitmans walk in carrying a black box on which they lay their hands. The Indian congregation goes silent, and the Whitmans authorize Father Arnold to continue his sermon. Although enamored of "his newfound power" over the Indians, Father Arnold becomes curious as to how the Whitmans so effectively silence the

congregation. When he asks, they explain to him that the boxes carry faith; the Protestant missionaries' idea of faith, however, coincides with the disciplinary tactics used to control Indian behaviors in the boarding schools, mission schools, and day schools. As they explain to Father Arnold, "*We told the Indians the boxes contained smallpox, and if we opened them, the disease would kill them*" (165). Thus, in the name of faith, the Whitmans threaten the Indians with biological warfare that silences their Native religious expressions and forces them to listen to Father Arnold.

That Father Arnold's nightmare about his own efficacy as a priest should involve the manipulations of Protestant missionaries accords with the jokes his parishioners make about the Protestant basketball teams. Yet the similarities Alexie draws between the ways in which Native bodies are manipulated through ideology, through stories, whether Catholic or Protestant, reveals the anxieties Father Arnold has about his office. Those physical and psychological manipulations that seem to determine Native behavior in the novel find their best expression in Checkers's story to Father Arnold.

Checkers, who stays on the Spokane Reservation while Coyote Springs travels to Seattle, also reveals the way in which the church's white standards of cleanliness, duty, and prosperity become internalized as shame. Though still within the institutional structure of the church and therefore its more formal mode of teaching, Checkers's story also demonstrates the complicity of religion with popular culture as she describes to Father Arnold the convergence of material with spiritual desires. Although Checkers, at least in this story, never underwent the trauma of having to cut off her hair or participate in forced domestic labor as Victor did, her desire to participate in the church as a valued member made her acutely aware of her difference from the young white girls in Missoula, "so perfect, so pretty, and so white" (140). Recalling that her childhood priest, Father James, had once brought his nieces to the Flathead Reservation, Checkers

describes her ambivalence about the white girls motivated by a dialectic between internalized oppression and a desire to be them, to have what they have. After telling Father Arnold about how the nieces had blamed she and her sister for dropping the Communion wine in the closet, Checkers mitigates the resentment it causes by continuing, "But his nieces could be nice, too. They let me play with their dolls sometimes. They were really good dolls, too" (141). Particularly in the last qualifying statement, Checkers reveals the extent to which she had internalized a hierarchy of value that placed her among its lowest rungs; the insistence on how "good" the dolls were suggests that the nieces offered her an immense kindness in allowing them to play with "good" dolls on an equal footing with them.

In both her memory of the dolls and its influence over her internalization of a shame and resentment that coalesces around her own brown skin, her Indianness, Checkers's story transitions a bit too easily into the convergence of the institutional site of de-Indianizing teachings—the Church—and the de-Indianizing influences of popular and material culture. As she begins to explain her desire to be "just like" the nieces, she admits, "I wanted to be as white as those little girls because Jesus was white and blond in all the pictures I ever saw of him" (141). When Father Arnold counters that Jesus was Jewish and probably had dark features, Checkers calls out the greater significance of the images, which depict Him as fair-skinned, blond-haired, and blue-eyed. Like the white dolls, the little white nieces "in their perfect little white dresses," looking "like angels," the prevalence of images that glorify and exalt whiteness work in tandem with the "disciplinary" strategies of the Mission School (if not the Church) and boarding schools, to eradicate the "savage" and brown Indian.

Even from the limited scope of *Reservation Blues*'s attention to "formal" routes of Indian education, we can glean the novel's engagement with the damaging effects of a

colonial system of eradication of Indian difference. As Alexie depicts the psychological effects of these lessons on Victor, Checkers, and even Father Arnold, who wants to free himself from the legacy of the office to which he has been assigned, each act of desiring or abuse, listening or storytelling, emerges as a form of disidentification with the lessons these characters learn. On the other hand, as Checkers evidences in her desire to be like the fair-skinned *images* of Jesus, popular culture can teach similar lessons much more insidiously, rendering disidentificatory practices simultaneously more difficult and more complex.

Indeed, in *Reservation Blues* as in much of Alexie's fiction, the pervasive, invasive, and paracolonial teachings of pop culture lead to the tragedies and despair that Gloria Bird decries.[72] Representations of Indian men as warriors or silent Tontos, Indian women as princesses or squaws, and all Indians regardless of gender as primitive, anti-modern, and ahistorical circumscribe the possibilities for Native cultural expression and success. As with Checkers, both the formal, or institutional, and informal, or popular culture, narratives converge in how Junior has come to understand himself. The embeddedness of pop culture narratives in particular, however, delimits Junior's capacity not for imagination per se, but for the ability to recognize his imaginative potential, as he strives to become "authentically" Indian:

> In Psychology 101, Junior had learned from Freud and Jung that dreams decided everything. He figured that Freud and Jung must have been reservation Indians, because dreams decided everything for Indians, too. Junior based all of his decisions on his dreams and visions, which created a lot of problems. When awake, he could never stomach the peanut butter and onion sandwiches that tasted so great in his dreams, but Junior always expected his visions to come true.

[72] The term "paracolonial" is one of Gerald Vizenor's neologisms that combines the meanings of the prefix para-, which include "beside" or "alongside" as well as "wrongfully, harmfully, unfavorably, and among" (Miller, J. 441), with the sign "colonial" (*Manifest Manners* 69). Thus, Vizenor suggests that contemporary Native American Indian life survives within enduring structures of colonialism that cannot be relegated to a "post."

> Indians were *supposed* to have visions and receive messages in their dreams. All the Indians on television had dreams that told them exactly what to do. (18)

While television teaches Junior that, as an Indian man, he is supposed to have dreams that will tell him his fate, his university training tells him that as an Indian, and not a European psychologist, he does not have the proper training or interpretive abilities to determine his dreams' meanings. The educational double-bind imposed on Junior requires that he, on one hand, enact a commodified version of Indianness that denies the need for interpretation to primitive Indians for whom signification is patent and immediate. On the other hand, his exposure to and simultaneous exclusion from psychoanalysis indicates that dreams reveal experiential and psychological information precisely on the basis of an interpretive power that marks a division between the dream's manifest and latent content.

Viewing himself as a text to be interpreted rather than an active interpreter of his own experiences, Junior refuses to acknowledge the tension between the promise and potential of his own experiences (including those of his dreams) and the script into which he has been cast by television and education, a script which reiterates General Philip Sheridan's insistence that the only good Indian is a dead one. In fact, Junior's dreams most closely approximate the kinds of stories that could counteract the effects of the educational double bind that faces so many of the characters. As Coyote Springs sleeps in the van the night before the Battle of the Bands, for instance, "Junior dreams about horses" (142). In his dream, Junior sits atop a pony, hears bugles and bullets whizzing by, and watches as young Spokane men and their horses fall all around him. Eventually imprisoned, his pony killed, Junior is forced to sign a piece of paper foisted on him by Generals George Wright and Philip Sheridan. Though the document—whether contract,

treaty, or some other document, the narrator does not specify—appears as a promise that will save Junior, the generals continue to threaten his execution:

> Do you want to say a prayer? Sheridan asked.
>
> I don't pray like that, Junior said.
>
> What do you do?
>
> I sing.
>
> Well, I think it's time for you to sing.
>
> In his dream, Junior started his death song and was barely past the first verse when the platform dropped from under him and the rope snapped tightly. (145).

Junior wakes up suddenly, shaken by the nightmare, but he never tells anyone of it, allowing its content to begin and end with him. For Junior, this silence, like the silencing effects of his inscription into inflexible narratives of Indianness, means death.

II. "LISTEN TO ME, LISTEN TO ME, LISTEN TO ME"[73]

In the context of the narrative, Junior's dream converges around several symbols that should impel Junior to listen to their resonances. These symbols, however, also become purely intertextual in a postmodern sense in the narrative because Alexie reverses the paradigm that posits Indian material culture—including clothing, ceremonial items, and music—as textual artifacts to be either suppressed and killed or freely shared. That is, when the novel marshalls the texts of colonialism or paracolonialism, it does so precisely as texts, specifically as historically determinist and postmodern cosmopolitan texts that have, as in Junior's case, entered the reservation and attempted to circumscribe its inhabitants' capacity to "revise old narratives or plot a more promising future" (Cox 157).

[73] This is the refrain from "Treaties."

Perhaps the most audible commentary on the text-based (para)colonial programs can be found in the song "Treaties." Though treaties themselves are documents that rely on faith in the power of text, the words "listen to me, listen to me, listen to me," open and pervade the song in a disjointed and disquieting manner that even Alexie's epigraph cannot inscribe. Including the repetition of these lines from "Treaties," the word "listen" appears in *Reservation Blues* over 130 times; of those, ninety-five, including the approximately seventy repetitions in "Treaties," are phrased as imperatives. The imperative to listen, as evoked in the command, listen to me, with its implied "you," grounds knowledge in a dialogic system that requires at once heightened attention to one's own personal experiences and the disarticulation of those experiences from the discursive systems to which they may be bound. It requires opening up to the possibility of alternative discursive systems in the epistemologies, experiences, and sounds of others. It also requires decision. In the space of silence that ensues when someone speaks the imperative to listen, the interlocutors are making decisions as to how they will listen, how much of themselves they will give over to the other and how little. The imperative to listen necessitates in the interlocutor a critical and potentially terrifying encounter with the stories they believe, with the stories they have allowed to guide their life choices. "Listen to me" interpellates the imperative you as a social agent implicitly engaged in a collective act of meaning-making. As a command, however, the imperative to listen can also be used to subdue; locating the social positions of the you and the me means implicitly locating the politics of listening that govern the imperative.

For instance, Alexie locates the social position of Sheridan and Wright—the latter of whom, while a colonel, was a signatory on the "Preliminary Articles of a Treaty of Peace and Friendship Between the United States and the Spokane Nation of Indians" (1858)—within a textual paradigm that demands that Native peoples "listen" within the

confines of "safe" listening behaviors enforced, for instance, in Indian education, while they need not give Native voices a hearing. Sheridan best illustrates this point when he forces his way into the hotel room where Checkers has been left alone. For Checkers, as for Victor, the line between dream and reality becomes blurred, evidencing the surreal quality of the characters' very presence in Manhattan. Alexie indicates here that, as stories, dreams have the same effect as "reality," since the felt, physical consequences of the experience are the same. Checkers, cornered by Philip Sheridan, whose record executive persona starts bleeding into his U.S. Army General persona, attempts to leave when Sheridan grabs her: "*This is just like you Indians*, Sheridan shouted in her face. *You could never stay where we put you. You never listened to orders*" (236). For Sheridan, listening to orders and ordering to listen amount to the same thing; *listen to me*, from the Manifest Destiny-oriented text into which Sheridan is ineluctably inscribed, means remaining confined, suppressed, silent.

Thus, when Alexie revives Wright and Sheridan as Cavalry Records producers, the novel creates dramatic intertextuality premised on the histories that Alexie includes in his "Acknowledgments," the narrative of Columbus's arrival in the New World as evidenced by the novel's setting during the quincentenary, the narrative of Manifest Destiny, and the assimilationist narrative of the Vanishing American. Yet it also confines Wright and Sheridan to an historical determinist text that cannot escape its nineteenth-century ideology of frontier expansion—now translated as a media expansion—and, in turn, declining Native presence. That text, as modeled by the paradigms of the treaty and the contract, circumscribes the space of the recording studio such that it becomes a dangerous space for Coyote Springs. There is no possibility for Native authorship in that space, no room for the reservation blues, which are unspeakable in the textual logic of historical determinism. In order to maintain the integrity of the nineteenth-century

colonial text and to effect its outcomes in the twentieth century, the whine of Victor's guitar, the rhythm kept by Junior's drum kit, and the voices of Thomas, Checkers, and Chess can only fail in the audition of the colonial forces of historical determinism. To echo a sound point made by Cherokee scholar Jace Weaver, "Natives, it seems, in the audition of settler colonizers are permitted first utterances and dying words but nothing in between" ("Splitting the Earth" 14). Coyote Springs's audition for Cavalry Records proves no exception.

Indeed, Coyote Springs exacerbates the tension between the script into the lines of which they have been cast, and their own Native soundscape when they decide to play "Urban Indian Blues." For the band, the song choice "makes sense" since they are, after all, in the middle of Manhattan. However, within the determinist text that is the purview of Wright, Sheridan, and Armstrong, who stand watching the band, appropriately, from the control booth, any urban Indian blues are incongruent with the script that positions Indians as always pre-modern. "Urban Indian Blues," as any good blues song should, calls out the narrative structure that undergirds Cavalry Records' power in this scene. The first line, for instance, directly references the 1950s-60s federal policy of relocation, implicitly paralleling Wright and Sheridan's bringing the band to New York City, with the mid-twentieth century political attempts to disintegrate the communal structures of the reservation by offering Native peoples incentives to move to urban areas. That relocation (and its cousin policy, termination) aimed, like the boarding schools, to assimilate Indians and thereby prepare them for citizenship comes under the critical gaze of the persona in "Urban Indian Blues." By the end of the song, the "I" who arrived at his hotel room and his new job has become so disaffected by his second-class status that he "dream[s] of the reservation." Putting his dreams into everyday practice, the singing persona tries to save up money for a Greyhound bus, but "the landlady raises the rent

[and] / The boss don't know where my check went." The lack of economic opportunity and the denial of rights attendant to the urban Indian blues even curtails the possibility for return that the traveling nature of the blues conventionally affords.

Musically, the song announces its modernity in the bluesy minor chord of the slide guitar and the slow four-on-the-floor drum beat. As the acoustic rhythm guitar emerges to move the song forward musically, the slide sounds over it with an initial upswing and a gradual move down the scales in two extended notes. In its contrapuntal play with the melodic movement of rhythm guitar, the slide appears to depress movement, lingering as it does in general and over the two lower chords in particular. As the singing persona shifts from a traditional blues emphasis on walking—"I'm walking sidewalks miles from home, I'm walking the streets alone"—to the stasis of the hotel room in a place called "The Tomb" where all he can do is watch television, the listener realizes that the slide guitar had predicted this outcome all along.

In the studio at Cavalry Records, however, Coyote Springs never gets to that point. When the band tries to play the song, Victor's guitar—acquired from Robert Johnson, who left it in Thomas's van—refuses to be played. Meeting the negative expectations of the three record executives and fulfilling the prophecies of the doubters on the Spokane Reservation, Coyote Springs fails not to imagine but to grasp the success promised to them by a white world that lies always just beyond the boundaries imposed, paradoxically, by white education and popular culture. As James Cox writes,

> Many people attempt . . . to exert control over the band: [Tribal Council Chairman David] WalksAlong wants them to turn down the volume; the members of the Catholic Church want them to stop playing; and Betty and Veronica, the two "New Age princesses," produce their own "white noise" that threatens to interfere with the performance of the all-Spokane [sic] band (41). In each case, these attempts to quiet or silence the band have colonial origins, either in a tribal government controlled by a bureaucrat hostile to members of his own tribe, in a

> Church that instituted a Christian belief in moral absolutes, or in a Eurowestern tradition, continued by the New Age Movement, of speaking over Native voices. (163-64)

All of these colonial forces converge in the space of the recording studio. That that space comes to define the band's ability, or inability, to play a contemporary Native blues seems only appropriate insofar as "Urban Indian Blues" threatens to denaturalize the stories of containment and confinement that authorize the voices of Wright, Sheridan, Armstrong, and even WalksAlong and the members of the Catholic Church. The band's inability to transform the space of the studio by sounding a unique and contemporary Indian blues, the inability to produce it as a Native space, bespeaks the ways in which the competing colonial texts come to define their contexts.

Thus, it comes as no surprise when Betty and Veronica, who have already been signed by Cavalry Records sight unseen, supersede Coyote Springs in the recording studio. Betty and Veronica represent everything that Wright and Sheridan want from Indianness—beauty, clothes, folksy sound, New Age spiritual practice. But most of all, Betty and Veronica appeal to Wright, Sheridan, and ultimately, Armstrong, because even though they have been to the reservation, suggesting the "authenticity" of their performance, they are not "just-off-the-reservation Indians" (269). That Betty and Veronica do succeed in the recording studio and have a contract for a CD to be released the following summer suggests their complicity in the historical determinist narrative that depends upon a later claim upon Indigenous material culture, but one removed from Native presence.

As New Age devotees, Betty and Veronica live up to precisely the promise of historical determinism. "In New Age identity quests," writes Standing Rock Sioux historian Philip Deloria, "one can see the long shadows of certain strands of postmodernism: increasing reliance on texts and interpretations, runaway individualism

within a rhetoric of community, the distancing of native people, and a gaping disjuncture between a cultural realm of serious play and the power dynamics of social conflict" (170). Indeed, if Wright and Sheridan, both the historical figures of late nineteenth-century Manifest Destiny and the late twentieth-century Cavalry Records producers, stand for a text-based program of historical determinism that erases Native contemporaneity, Betty and Veronica represent the postmodern version of the program that continues to insist on textuality as the basis for spiritual experience even when firm meanings are wrested from the experiential, social, and political contexts. Given Philip Deloria's emphasis on the significance of textual study for New Age spiritualists to learn how to "play Indian," Betty and Veronica's profession as independent book store owners in Spokane locates them squarely within the postmodernist New Age script. When, in fact, the dire poverty, hunger, and anger of the Spokane Reservation begin to overwhelm them, they can return to the safety of their textual haven.

Though their postmodern text writ large and their New Age textual market in particular allow Betty and Veronica to ignore the material conditions of the Spokane Reservation and adhere to the New Age narrative that emplots Indians as "at peace with the earth [and] . . . so wise" (*Reservation Blues* 168), Thomas has no such luxury when he receives the cassette tape recording of their first song (294-95). Though he briefly entertains the idea of just throwing the tape away and never listening to it, his understanding of the extent to which popular culture occupies the reservation leads him to realize that not listening to it "wouldn't do any good, because the CD would be all over the place next summer," and he wants to be able to protect Chess and Checkers from Betty and Veronica's musical invasion. As he turns the tape over in his hands, then, deciding what to do, his impulse to protect Chess and Checkers arises not just from the song, but from all the "white noise" encoded in it and in the New Agers' crass

appropriation of an "Indian" simulacrum. Thus, the whole evolution of the band, Sheridan and Wright's decision to "darken [Betty and Veronica] up a bit. . . . Dye their hair black," Victor's alcoholism, Thomas's forced exile from his reservation, all of those stories and their impacts threaten to explode from the magnetic codes on that tape. The "aura," in Walter Benjamin's sense, of the colonial texts that went into the tape's production inheres in the magnetized ribbons of tape as Thomas turns the cassette over in his hands.[74]

Ultimately, however, Alexie reverses the paradigm of a cosmopolitan postmodernist narrative in which contact has, in the audition of late twentieth-century settler colonizers, rendered Indians and Indianness consumable, unmeaning texts in order to confine the colonial forces in the novel to the prison house of their own discursive making by refusing to allow either Betty and Veronica or Wright and Sheridan out of their respective textual constraints. Thus, as Thomas listens to the tape, he recognizes in the opening instrumental, a "vaguely Indian drum, then a cedar flute, and a warrior's trill, all the standard Indian soundtrack stuff" (295). The invocation of the soundtrack in this final interaction with the historical or pop cultural forces of (para)colonialism recalls simultaneously the cultivated TOM-tom-tom-tom Hollywood western "sound of Indian" that Philip Deloria examines in *Indians in Unexpected Places* (2004) as well as the *Reservation Blues* soundtrack, a cultivated, collaborative, and formally innovative Indian blues. In the end, that is, readers cannot hear Betty and Veronica, who remain discursively confined—in a reversal of the constraints of "safe" practices—to the

[74] Benjamin argues in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" that although copies lack the original's "presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be," they nevertheless retain the "aura" of those material circumstances of production (220). Though typically the aura obscures mechanical modes of production in the service of romanticizing the piece of art, for Thomas, the aura of the cassette tape offers a painful reminder of the dangers the Cavalry Records studio space posed.

postmodern text of Indianness. Even while Thomas listens to them singing, "Don't listen to what they say / You can be Indian in your bones," readers, ultimately, cannot listen to what Betty and Veronica say in the way that they can listen to what Alexie and Boyd say on the soundtrack (296). And given Thomas's reaction, we probably would not want to.

In a final act of resistance to the encroachment of either the historical determinist or cosmopolitan postmodernist texts onto the reservation, Thomas unravels the tape from the cassette, stomps on it, and runs through his house to gather up all of his family's belongings: "Then he ran around his house, grabbing photos and souvenirs, afraid that somebody was going to steal them next. He had photographs of his mother and father, a Disneyland cup even though he'd never been there, a few letters and cards. He gathered them all into a pile on the kitchen table and waited" (296). For Thomas, who recognizes the cultural theft in Betty and Veronica's song as a theft of material culture sanctioned by the material forces of production that enabled their suitability (with some slight modifications) for Cavalry Records, the song thwarts the potential of Native peoples to stop such acts of theft in their repeated invocation *not* to listen. Ironically, the negative imperative—"don't listen to what they say"—actually uncovers the paradigmatic textual basis for Betty and Veronica's success (they have, after all, signed a contract), which the logic of the narrative itself holds in suspension. In a novel that so privileges listening and calls on its own readers to listen, the command, "don't listen to what they say" further distances Betty and Veronica from the novel's audience.

"AND IF YOU STOP TO LISTEN / WELL, YOU'LL HEAR WHAT YOU'VE BEEN MISSIN'"[75]

Instead of listening to or for textual support for one's positions, the novel privileges a blues listening ethic that presumes a certain affiliation and empathy between

[75] This line is repeated in the song, "Big Mom."

the blues artist and the audience. The blues form articulates listening to experience such that histories of poverty, displacement, and disenfranchisement cohere in the particular enunciation and intonations of the blues' lyricism, improvisatory form, and instrumentation. For Ralph Ellison, for instance, the blues constitute an expressive impulse in their lyrical and musical evocations of the physical and emotional pain of Black experience: "The blues is an impulse," he writes, "to keep the painful details and episodes of a brutal experience alive in one's aching consciousness, to finger its jagged grain, and to transcend it not by the consolation of philosophy but by squeezing from it a near-tragic, near-comic lyricism. As a form, the blues is an autobiographical chronicle of personal catastrophe expressed lyrically" (78-79). In *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature*, Houston Baker, Jr., extrapolates from the autobiographical conception of the blues to identify their place in an inextricably social and historical form. Contradicting Ellison, he writes, "Rather than a rigidly personalized form, the blues offer a phylogenetic recapitulation—a nonlinear, freely associative, nonsequential meditation—of species experience" (5). Though Baker's diction risks essentialism, his insistence on phylogenesis draws attention to historical and discursive experiences shared between the blues lyricist and his or her audience. Although the blues lyric may certainly express an autobiographical chronicle of catastrophe, it also invites listeners' identification with its asymptotic approach to both the comedy and the tragedy of painful experience through what Baker theorizes as the blues' "signatory code":

> What emerges is not a filled subject, but an anonymous (nameless) voice issuing from the black (w)hole. The blues singer's signatory code is always *atopic*, placeless: "If anybody asks you who sang this song / Tell 'em *X* done been here and gone." This "signature" is a space already "X"(ed), a trace of the already "gone"—a fissure rejoined. Nevertheless, the "you" (audience) addressed is always free to invoke the X(ed) spot in the body's absence. For the signature comprises a scripted authentication of "your" feelings. Its mark is an invitation to

> energizing intersubjectivity. Its implied injunction reads: Here is my body meant for (a phylogenetically conceived) you. (5)

Baker thus acknowledges and circumvents the potential appropriation of the blues by a non-empathetic audience in his underscoring of the necessity of a shared experience between singer and audience. Juxtaposing Ellison's blues impulse with Baker's conception of the blues listener suggests that encoded in the blues is an imperative to listen to the memories that the blues carry, to the simultaneously painful and pleasurable experiences the blues disseminate.

The conditional—rather than imperative—phrasing of the lyric from "Big Mom," "if you stop to listen / well you'll hear what you've been missin'," offers another clue as to how *Reservation Blues* positions its readers. Just as Thomas stops to listen to Robert Johnson singing "Preachin' Blues (Up Jumped the Devil)" from atop Big Mom's mountain, allowing the memories the song inspires to inhabit his imagination momentarily, so readers are encouraged to listen to the characters in this novel, as well as Alexie and Boyd. In other words, we must listen outside of the texts and textuality that silence Native voices or render them irredeemably hopeless.

The blues impulse, that is, suggests that the lyrical expression of the blues that comes to formally embody experience cannot be contained in or by the texts that define colonial power in the novel. Instead, they offer "a new road" (*Reservation* Blues P#).As indicated when Thomas sits down to write Coyote Springs's first song, "Reservation Blues," the conditions for the Spokanes' blues experience are themselves created by but also in excess of the colonial forces that continually threaten the survival of the community. When he sits down to write, Thomas first "trie[s] to find a story with a soundtrack" (an embedded *Reservation Blues* cameo?), falls asleep watching *The Sound of Music*, and steps outside to listen "to those faint voices that echoed all over the

reservation. Everybody heard those voices, but nobody like to talk about them. They were loudest at night, when Thomas tried to sleep, and he always thought they sounded like horses" (46-47). Though Thomas seeks inspiration in his attempts to listen to the reservation's soundscape, the novel affirms the fact that the blues have to come from experience, when Thomas finally feels his Spokane blues' motivating force: hunger. After engaging in "a ceremony he had practiced since his youth, [in which] he opened, closed, and opened the fridge again, expecting an immaculate conception of a jar of pickles" and thinking through the "ninety-seven different ways" in which *fry bread* insinuates itself into the thoughts and lives of the Spokane, Thomas sits down to write "Reservation Blues" accompanied by the rhythms of his "growling stomach" (47). Though Alexie presents it humorously, transitioning from the various ways in which Spokanes use "fry bread" to communicate to Victor's insistence, "I ain't got much fry bread left. How long before we get to play some real music?" which reminds Thomas of his task, Thomas here fulfills Ellison's prescription to "finger the jagged grain" of a painful experience and to keep it always in view through its lyrical re-creation.

Thomas's hunger, a painful reminder of the economic dependency of the reservation on commodity foods, pervades the lyrics of "Reservation Blues." In keeping with the tradition of African American blues forms, "Reservation Blues," too, reiterates the economic exigencies that have created the conditions for blues experiences like hunger. That is, in its repetitions of "I aint' got nothing, heard no good news / I'll fill my pockets with those reservation blues," the song implicitly speaks to a recognition of the material conditions of the reservation rather than the romanticized version of Indianness (in which poverty is maintained as a pre-requisite to spiritual fulfillment) that Betty and Veronica embrace and that Cavalry Records ultimately sells.

In fact, “Reservation Blues” insists on recalling the limitations that the historical determinist and postmodernist texts impose on native cultural expressions in its repetition of the question, “If you ain’t got choices / What else do you choose?” In other words, if all you hear is Betty and Veronica and, by extension, Wright, Sheridan, and Armstrong, how could you possibly choose a different story, a different dream, a different song? Though as a rhetorical question, the lyric seems to imply an embrace of nihilism, the novel itself does offer choices to the characters, crucially, while keeping the limitations of text and space in mind. The spiritual leader and music teacher, Big Mom, comes to embody the improvisational character of those choices.

Big Mom, whose timelessness and ubiquity give her an unmatched pedagogical authority on the reservation and beyond, nevertheless also learns the harsh lessons of discipline and containment that informed the ideology of nineteenth century Indian education. In the early pages of the novel, Alexie dramatizes an episode in the history of Spokane-U.S. relations, the massacre of almost 1,000 horses in 1858, as one that teaches Big Mom an unforgettable lesson in listening. Historically, the horses represented the “dangerous” political economies of the Interior Salish tribes that included the Spokanes insofar as horses provided material goods for trading, gifting, and gambling, activities that positioned the tribes outside the cash economies moving into the area with increased U.S. settlement. They also, of course, represented a “dangerous” form of freedom that empowered the tribes at war with the United States at that time. Ruby and Brown thus offer some of General Wright’s reasoning for commanding the slaughter: “Although killing horses on the frontier was a crime,” they write,

> this was war, and all was fair in it. Wright feared that to keep the animals would be to invite raids from the Indians. . . . The horses were too wild to be herded, as the command moved east, and should they be permitted to fall back into Indian hands, their riders would have regained mobility to continue resistance and

> retaliation. Not to be overlooked as a motive for the horse slaughter was Wright's desire t punish the Indians for their resistance. A few simple words explained the thinking of the board convened by Wright to decide the animals' fate: "Without horses the Indians are powerless." (136).

While Wright, in the midst of battle, turns to the language of power, his statement also underscores the cultural relevance of the horses for the Spokanes and other Interior Salish tribes allied against the United States. Part of the tribes' power as well as resistance lay in the tenacity of their tribal cultural expression, which included racing horses and trading them within and between tribes.[76]

Alexie draws on the horses' historical symbolism and adds another symbolic layer by making them Big Mom's students. Big Mom listens as the horses sing a song she has never heard before, one that they certainly did not learn from her. "One hundred and thirty-four years before Robert Johnson walked onto the Spokane Reservation," the narrator introduces,

> the Indian horses screamed. At first, Big Mom thought the horses were singing a familiar song. She had taught all of her horses to sing many generations before, but she soon realized this was not a song of her teaching. . . . She listened carefully to the horses' song, until she had memorized it, and harmonized. She wanted to ask many questions about the new song when she visited the horses next. (9)

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[76] Alexie gestures to this particular history, entitled *The Spokane Indians: Children of the Sun*, in his "Acknowledgments." Characteristic of its date of publication, the authors do not emphasize the tenacity of tribal cultural expressions among the Spokanes, electing instead to focus on their "suitability" for assimilation in their desire to learn reading and writing and Christian religious teachings. Nevertheless, a few moments in the history serve to disrupt the "good" (read assimilable) Indian argument they purport to convey. One of the most visible moments occurs in this passage: "In January, 1891 [just a month following the massacre at Wounded Knee], there was some apprehension that local Indians were dancing the Messiah Dance. . . . But these were not the Messiah Dances to overthrow the white men; they were simply the mid-winter Chinook dances to implore the Great Spirit to send a mild winter. There were other dances imploring Him to keep the smallpox away, for it had been severe the year before" (199). Although the authors here seek to assuage readers' suspicions, they actually reveal the complexity of the tribes' (in this case, Spokane and Colville) balancing of traditional Indigenous practices with immigrant beliefs through hidden techniques of resistance (Troutman 13). That tribal dance was viewed as an indication of "savagery" and unsuitability for citizenship also underscores the authors' need to downplay the politics of the dance.

She would never have the chance to ask them about the new song or the unnerving silence that followed because of the gunshots that broke the silence. Students of Big Mom's musical teachings, the horses had learned to improvise a prophetic song of their own, a song that, unebeknownst to Big Mom, had heralded their deaths.

Though Big Mom, playing the flute that she created from the bones of the massacred horses, understands and teaches that "music created the world daily," she nevertheless struggles to anticipate the imbrication of music in a symbolic order in which cultural expressions of freedom are viewed as dangerous. The horses' death song, their scream, announces the imminent threat to which their cultural knowledge (passed down from Big Mom) has exposed them, but only because, as Wright tells Junior and Sheridan tells Checkers, "*This is war*" (143, 237). The horses' death song thus announces the encroachment of the policing, disciplining, and silencing forces of white culture and the threat of death it implies.

Alexie updates the horses' symbolism by staging their return to Big Mom in the forms of musicians like Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, Marvin Gaye, and most recently, Robert Johnson. Each of these returns makes audible something of the uncontainable, unintelligible aspect of the horses' scream, which signals throughout the novel the danger of certain spaces, for instance, the Cavalry Records recording studio (225). Joplin's scream, the whiny reverb of Hendrix's guitar, the ungraspable bass of his voice, and Marvin Gaye's velvet vocals in protest and in desire all place these figures' sonic personae outside the prison walls of reason, the known, and the knowable, and, thus, in the realm of "dangerous" sounds. Far more criminal than their drug usage or sexuality, these musicians made sounds that exceeded the bounds of decorum in the twentieth century; they felt and made people feel the musical creation of the world. They used sound in ways that it was never meant to be used in polite society, and, therefore, they

transgressed an unwritten rule of the popular music soundscape: it must contain feeling. Because their sound proliferated affect instead of containing it, like the horses that preceded them, "they all fell back into the earth again," well before their time (10).

Although his character seems doomed to fall prey to the same alcoholic and addictive tendencies of Joplin, Hendrix, and Gaye, Michael White Hawk nevertheless provides the most explicit instance of a student whose potential affirms the uncontainable quality of music. In his development of White Hawk's character, Alexie succumbs to the danger in adhering to a "reservation realism" that depicts rampant alcoholism as an ineluctably debilitating force (*Lone Ranger* xxi). White Hawk's genealogy, for instance, risks naturalizing the violence and alcoholism that plague the reservation:

> Michael's mother had died of cirrhosis when he was just two years old, and he'd never even known his father. Michael was conceived during some anonymous three-in-the-morning pow-wow encounter in South Dakota. His mother's drinking had done obvious damage to Michael in the womb. He had those vaguely Asian eyes and the flat face that alcohol babies always had on reservations. (39)

The "obvious damage" written on White Hawk's facial features tells a story of the past that will inevitably determine his future; self-destruction seems inescapable for this character, just another rendition of the Vanishing American.[77] White Hawk's sole saving grace is that Big Mom refuses to assent to such a destructive outcome, believing instead in the potential for music to heal.

For Big Mom, wedding music to life (hi)stories enables the incorrigibility of sound's affective excess to pry open the bars of interpellation that confine Indian identity. In White Hawk's case, that means freeing him not just from an inborn predilection for alcoholism, but also from pop culture narratives of Indian masculinity that cast all Native men as warriors. Big Mom begins to question what White Hawk knows about Indianness

[77] Indeed, Cherokee literary critic Sean Teuton remarks that he "feel[s] a twinge of shame, then take[s] offense, when confronted with the image of American Indian alcoholism" in the passage above (255 n. 4).

in order to start moving him toward a fuller conception that includes playing the saxophone:

> "But, Big Ma," White Hawk said, "I'm a warrior. I'm 'posed to fight."
>
> "No, Michael, you're a saxophone player, and you need to work on your reed technique." (208).

This contest of definitions leads ultimately to White Hawk's refusal to listen to Big Mom on the basis that she is, after all, "jus' a woman" (208). White Hawk allows both stories—of his "inherent" alcoholism and of his "inherent" propensity to violence—to define him, and in defining him, they ultimately confine him.

Unlike the horses, whose perceived criminality was founded on their participation in the economic and social life of the Spokanes, Michael White Hawk, the narrative suggests, is born into and then educated by the ideological confinement that the horses' scream heralds. White Hawk, like the other men "drawn to Big Mom . . . [had] started to believe their own publicity and run around acting like the Indians in movies" (208). The "public" education White Hawk and other men receive through television and film, then, already sounds out of the white noise that delimits the potential of Native masculinity. But another difference from the horses could lead the men, like White Hawk as well as Victor and Junior, to listen past the white noise: choice. In other words, Big Mom, who maintains, "I ain't Jesus. I ain't God. . . . I'm just a music teacher," insists on the power of teaching musical experience in order to overcome the noise of pop culture stories of Indian masculinity that threaten the reservation at least as much as alcohol. Her teaching, above all, relies on the students choosing to listen to her on her own terms. Hence, the conditional phrasing in the song: "*If* you stop to listen / well, you'll hear what you've been missin'."

Time and again, the decision—not the inability—not to listen to Big Mom, to view her suddenly as "a witch, bitter and angry," leaders her students to a life without music. "You can still see them" the narrator illustrates, "standing by the drums at powwows, trying to remember how to sing in the Indian way." Big Mom's voice would enter their thoughts, commanding them, "*Listen to me. I'll teach you*" (209). Big Mom's imperative to listen, then, is a pedagogical imperative that positions Big Mom within a framework of "education *by* Indian people" (Lomawaima 422). She encourages her students, like the horses, to listen beyond the texts into which dominant ideologies and educational practices seek to inscribe them in order to hear the choices that they do have, choices frequently in their midst, in their communities. Not to listen beyond the texts, Big Mom suggests, is to choose silence, which frequently ends in death.

After she teaches Coyote Springs, Big Mom reflects on the choices she has put before them, choices that, as "Reservation Blues" attests, they do not see themselves as having. Though she cautions Victor that he should give up Robert Johnson's guitar, she knows that, in the end, he has to make the choice. Though she thinks signing a contract with Cavalry Records would be a bad idea, she tells Coyote Springs, "Listen . . . [m]aybe you'll go out there and get famous. . . . I've had students invent stuff I never would have thought of, like jazz and rap. I've seen it all. But I ain't had many students who ended up happy, you know? So what do you want me to say? It's up to you. You make your choices" (216). Although Coyote Springs ultimately decides to go into the studio, a context so determined by its text that Indian voices are rendered inaudible, unintelligible, unmeaning except as "first utterances and dying words," Big Mom's advice carries through to readers Native and non-Native alike.

To choose to listen beyond the confines of the text to the soundtrack reveals a path alternative to the one that Coyote Springs chose to take. Insofar as Alexie has posed

the question about how Vizenor's postmodern tricksterism might be useful to "a twelve-year-old rez kid," we might consider that rez kid as the phylogenetically conceived audience that Alexie has in mind for *Reservation Blues* (qtd. in Owens, *Mixedblood* 79). In order to offer that particular student a safe Native space, outside the declension and New Age narratives that threaten to silence Native peoples at every turn, Alexie offers the soundtrack as the end for which the novel was simply the means, a manual for learning to listen. Instead of the ideologically confining space of the Cavalry Records studio, the soundtrack offers the student the sounds of a Greater Interior Salish collaboration within the safe space of Jim Boyd's Rez Recording studio in Washington. It also offers the example of Boyd himself, whose Thunderwolf Records label offers an exemplary model of American Indian musical success. Boyd and Thunderwolf have won five Native American Music Awards (NAMMYs) for *alterNATIVES* (2002 Records of the Year), Jim Boyd and Kyo-T, *Live* (Best Pop/Rock Recording), *Going to the Stick Games* (2004 Record of the Year), *Them Old Guitars* (2005 Songwriter of the Year), and his music video for the song, "Inchelium" (2007 Best Short Form Video).

Moreover, tracking the success of the songs reveals their circulation beyond the routes that the text alone takes. Three of the ten songs from the *Reservation Blues* soundtrack, for instance, are featured on the motion picture *Smoke Signals*, for which Alexie wrote the screenplay. The track, "Small World," which features spoken word performances by Alexie for the verses and Jim Boyd playing and singing for the chorus, has been featured on two compilation CDs: *Talking Rain: Spoken Word & Music from the Pacific Northwest*, released by Tim Kerr, February of 1995, and *Honor: A Benefit for the Honor the Earth Campaign*, released by Daemon Records, August of 1996.

Perhaps most important to assessing the success of these works for their listeners is hearing and reading what the listeners themselves have to say. Indeed, a brief survey of

the Customer Reviews from Amazon.com reveals a chasm of difference between how listeners have received the soundtrack and how literary critics have received, and in some cases taught, the books. Though I will not pretend to know or even to hazard a guess as to which reviewers may be Native, First Nations, and/or American Indian people, their comments about the hope*ful*ness of the works is illustrative. Attesting to the significance of the experiential content of *Smoke Signals*, while citing the emotional response to a *Reservation Blues* song also on the film soundtrack, FE Harrison writes of *Smoke Signals*: "For those of you who were bedazzled by the film, as I was, for any of you who identified with it, (I did) and for those of you who took in the nuances and moments and let them fill you, (ditto self), this soundtrack will undoubtedly become an important one in your collection. Everytime I listen, I am watching the film, experiencing it all over again. "Father and Farther" gets to me every time" ("Absorbing, powerful, evocative"). Dale Moomaw, also writing of the *Smoke Signals* soundtrack, but speaking to the tracks from *Reservation Blues*, identifies the blues listener's impulse to keep experiential memory in view as a means of coping with stress and trauma. He writes:

> Smoke Signals Soundtrack is incredible. I grew up on the Colville Indian Res, and was able to listen to great Pow Wow music most of my life. This soundtrack really puts my life into perspective. There is some old style music mixed with a new sound. This CD can really give you a taste of it all. I now live in Ft. Worth, TX and work in very busy Trauma-ER. Everyday on my way home I listen to a few songs on the Smoke Signals soundtrack. I also have a few Jim Boyd CD's. He can really get you up spiritually when you are down.

This review also evidences the healing capacity of music for those, like Thomas, Chess, and Checkers, who are either by choice or by force, living away from home and from family.

The music produced by Alexie and Boyd thus offers listeners a strategy for survival, but it also offers more than that. It offers hope. Whether the *Reservation Blues*

offer a grown man or woman catharsis at the end of a long day or inspire a young person to take up the guitar, or bass, or even the saxophone, they teach lessons of endurance, of resistance to confinement to colonial texts of erasure. They teach that if you stop to listen, you might hear what you've been missin'.

Chapter Four: *Caramba*'s Gran Baile of Listening

Nina Marie Martínez has said of her debut novel, *¡Caramba!: A Tale Told in Turns of the Card*, that destiny and fate (destino) are important themes that emerge through its lotería structure in which "the story is told as if it were a game, and that these cards were being drawn from the deck by an anonymous but divine hand" ("About the Author"). As with lotería, a Mexican bingo-like game in which dichos, or axioms, and associated images take the place of U.S.-style bingo's letter-and-number combinations, the themes of chance, destiny, or divinity in the novel are linked to specific expressive forms and material practices. Drawing on religious traditions and spiritual practices from Catholic saints and tiraditos to Protestant hymns to brujería and curanderismo, *Caramba* articulates the spiritual practices of making a place for oneself in Heaven to the very material practice of making spaces of belonging on earth. In so doing, she places considerable significance on the acts through which community is built, on the work it takes to construct spiritual and material spaces of belonging in the fictional southern California town of Lava Landing in which the novel is set.

In accordance with this structure, Martínez depicts her main characters as "divine women" whose timeless beauty and ability to construct and transform shared spaces of belonging, or pathways thereto, underscores the effects of the spiritual on the material realms of this novel. In addition to Natalie and Consuelo, or Nat and Sway as the narrator affectionately refers to the two main characters, Lulabell, a bruja and mother to Javier Solís (whose tocayo, or namesake, Lulabell adored and whose death occasioned Javier's birth seven weeks early), True-Dee, a transgender hair stylist and defender of traditional femininity, Lucha, a drug-trafficking ex-convict, and her cousin Fabiola, who has not spoken since she was violently molested at the age of five, all function in this capacity.

Their lives cross at various points with the two primary male figures, Javier, Lulabell's son and leader of Mariachi de Dos Nacimientos (a Born-Again Christian Mariachi), and Sway's father Don Pancho Macías Contreras, a.k.a. DP, whose spirit haunts the beautiful women of both Lava Landing and Cerro Verde in the hopes that he will be "sprung" from Purgatory where everything is white and the angels force him to learn English and drink Jamaica (despite the monochromatic color scheme, horchata is reserved for those in Heaven).

In addition to the spiritual and community-building work of the divine women and the men who work, to greater or lesser degrees, toward achieving divinity, other, only apparently marginal, characters guide the narrative's movement. They come, on one hand, from a community of migrant Mexican laborers and, on the other, from elite members of the local community represented by the Miss Magma contest judges and the Sons and Daughters of San Narciso, a secret cult invested in the imminent explosion of the volcano in the shadow of which Lava Landing is located. The ostensibly marginal characters, though, actually frame much of the narrative action and setting. For instance, the reigning Miss Magma, April May, appears throughout the novel, interweaving the town's history with her own nine-year reign as the town's and the volcano's queen. Moreover, the novel takes place over the course of one summer in order to narratively accommodate the heightened availability of the migrant ranch hands and day laborers. The novel's setting and its chronicling of Lava Landing as a metonym for a more inclusive model of Greater Mexican belonging thus depends on cycles and routes of migration.

If, according to the lotería structure, each of these actors in the narrative become players in a game of chance, the material "artifacts" that Martínez uses to locate the characters geographically, culturally, and politically, reveal that these are highly skilled

players, well-versed in the logics of the cards that the "divine hand" turns as well as the dichos that the cancionero "sings." One of those material artifacts is "The Guide to the Rockola at the Big Five-Four." The Rockola at the Big Five-Four, one of the bars in Lava Landing, contains twenty-four rancheras (performed in a variety of genres, including mariachi),[78] sixteen norteñas, fourteen bandas, four each from the categories of Mexican pop, Tejano, and American country 'n western, and two each from American pop and Argentine Nueva Ola. Each of these genres and their attendant performance styles along with the logics of listening they entail, generate multiple forms of sociality and belonging. Taken together and recognized in their difference, for their difference, each form and performance of belonging illustrates the vast heterogeneity of Greater Mexico.

In this chapter, I trace three of these musical traditions, the norteño (Los Tigres del Norte's "Los dos plebes," H86), the mariachi serenata ("Serenata Huasteca," O24), and finally Mexican pop (Juan Gabriel, "Querida," S19), in order to demonstrate how each tradition articulates its own forms of performance and, in turn, expressions of cultural citizenship. Insofar as these codes address listeners, they also interpellate them within the expectations framed in the cultural and social logics of the songs themselves. But among the characters in *Caramba*, the everyday practices of listening never fully accord with the logics of address implied in the traditions that shape the soundscape of Lava Landing. What "logics" and the universalizing tendencies of convention fail to account for—feelings, pleasures, pains, desires, in a word, lived experiences—register an excess, an overflow of the interpellative bounds of the soundscape much as the very conception of Greater Mexico at play in the novel exceeds state-national boundaries of citizenship.

[78] Fully one third (twenty-four out of seventy-two) of the songs on the jukebox are in the ranchera style. Though these songs are attributed to the singers, in almost every case, the performers are accompanied by a mariachi ensemble.

I. Roots in Routes: Norteño, El Baile Grande, and the (Re)Production of Compalandia

No genre performs that transnational excess more self-consciously than norteño, and no other band performs norteño self-consciousness more capably than Los Tigres del Norte. In their song, "Los Dos Plebes," the super-group offers a glimpse into the importance of establishing relationships with those "muy pegadito a la sierra"[79] through which a migrant might pass. The two men in dialogue throughout the song, one from Durango, the other from Sinaloa, share with each other not only "un regalito"[80] that keeps them awake (cocaine, presumably) and some beers to wash it down but also their stories, detailing the many enemies who would like to see them dead. The Sinaloan's offer to house the new friend from Durango should he need to escape to the mountains reveals the protective gestures of those "like-minded individuals" who can navigate the social, political, emotional, and geographical terrain of the space they call home (Martínez 6).

Though this song, like much norteño music, signals in somewhat veiled terms the men's extralegal activities, it also offers strategies for survival in a homeland that denies the legitimacy of norteño life ways—including musical performance—particularly of "los plebes." One of those strategies involves the risky task of identifying in a stranger (extranjero) a potential ally through the exchange of material goods ("este regalito y un trago pa' que lo baje"), stories ("yo también tengo los mios me andan queriendo matar"), and, founded on the first two, an emotional investment ("lo espero para invitarle otra buena borrachera").[81] These strategies help to create what Cathy Ragland calls a "Mexican global nation" linked through networks of norteño musicians, fans, and Mexican and Central American migrant communities. Ragland writes, for instance,

[79] "closely tied to the mountain/land"
[80] "a little gift"
[81] As ordered above: "a little gift and a drink to wash it down"; "I too have many enemies who would like to see me dead"; "I hope for the opportunity to have another drinker to my home."

"[d]espite limited socioeconomic advancement, many immigrants draw strength from extensive networks that span the diaspora, together creating an 'imagined community,' one that is based on strong attachments to Mexican heritage and culture but not to the Mexican geopolitical state" (203). Like los dos plebes in a cantina in Sinaloa, those who work to construct the Mexican global nation do so through an affective currency that creates spaces of belonging, however temporary. That affective currency at once propels and is motivated by the musical articulation of a space that already invites a shared expression of identification and exchange, what I call the gran baile of listening.

The gran baile of listening, the play of distance and proximity, recognition and disidentification, familiarity and alienation, is most explicitly articulated in the scene of Lava Landing's Baile Grande (or BG) that marks the end of summer. Unlike El Aguantador and the Big Five-Four, which remain in Lava Landing to create permanent—if differentiated—sites of belonging, the Baile Grande only happens once a year, in August. Afterwards, "everyone rushes to the taquería and orders menudo so as to cure their crudas, but after, the ranch hands and day laborers put their heads down and it's puro trabajar from there on until diciembre when they all board Mexicana® flights home" (298). The scene of the Baile Grande, featuring the norteño stylings of Los Huracanes del Norte, emplots the performance and transmission of a cultural repertoire that helps to establish the transient movement of Lava Landing's transformative and disidentificatory politics of listening.

Richly documenting the extent to which the potential for belonging exists in any space, no matter how "peripheral," the narrator urges readers to:

> Imagine this if you will: five thousand ranch hands and day laborers from the tri-city area that is Lava County dressed up in their very best, piling into an exhibit hall at the Lava Country Fairgrounds, which, earlier that year, held home-baked, thick-crusted apple pies, jams and jellies, gingerbread men and houses, candy and

> other such confectionary delights, quilts, pillows, sweaters, science experiments, and prize-winning flowers put on show by county residents. But the exhibit hall named after some white, wealthy, upstanding onetime resident of Lava County, a Jones, Murphy, Kennedy or other, has all of the sudden become the site of Un Gran Bailaso. (298)

Converting the fairgrounds space into "Compalandia, that fictional place that really exists, where there is drink, food, and more than anything else paisanos," writes over the cultural and aesthetic practices of Lava Landing's white residents with those of its Mexicana/o residents and migrants (303). Even the prize-winning foods exhibited earlier in the year cannot compete with the presence, real and imagined, of "tacos, tortas, chiles rellenos, tostadas, enchiladas, tamales, sopes, gorditas . . . menudo (¡Ay! qué rico), pozole, cocido, y caldo de camarón" (301). These foods suggest the very material ways in which the consumption practices of Compalandia form the bases for the exchange of affective currency that stakes the class and territorial claims of Lava Landing's greater Mexican community.

Recognition of communally shared aesthetic practices in the space of the dance, what Latina/o performance theorists such as José Esteban Muñoz, Ramón Rivera-Servera, and Deborah Paredez have deemed affective latinidad, emerges also in the logic of norteño as a set of practices wedded to the working class and to deterritorialization through migration, often forced through economic necessity. The BG's headliner, Los Huracanes del Norte, signals this deterritorialization and its affective, sonic reclamation in their saludos, or shout-outs, for the people of different states of Mexico's northern border and western coastal regions: "pa' toda la gente de Guanajuato; los amigos de Durango . . . y ¡arriba Sinaloa!; no se me raje Jalisco; a mis amigos de San Luis Potosí, la raza de Michoacán no se me queda," and, finally, "¡qué viva México!" (302). In Compalandia the songs, dancing, food, and drink create an electric reminder of lands left behind. The BG recreates a site of specifically Greater Mexican belonging, where the

reminders are not those of the grueling quotidian elements of migrant life, but rather of a homeland that through memory actually exists in that space. That is, if, as Paredez following Joseph Roach suggests, memory, like performance, is "an act of creation as well as citation," then the musical performances—including not only singing and playing instruments but also and crucially, the gran baile of the audience—in the space of the Baile Grande creates out of the remembered homeland a re-membered, reconfigured home space, a space of belonging and transformation (8).

Los Huracanes offer to the five thousand ranch hands and day laborers in the audience, territorial nostalgia as a replacement for the harsh economic realities they face, allowing them, if only temporarily, to be "whatever [they] wannabe" (302). The narrator captures the affective tenor of the moment, so full of possibility, as the music plays and the saludos sail across the crowd:

> And all of a sudden you're not a gardener, a "yanitór," a cook, a maid, un carpintero. You don't work at the car "watch," or en la canería, in the fields piscando las strawberries, los tomates, chiles, and whatever else is in season, en las huertas pulling, shaking, then bucketing the fruit from the trees. You don't fry up the tortillas todo el pinche día from the small confines of the lonchera. You're not a stucco slapper, a tile layer, a paver, a jackhammer operator. You're not somebody that does what no one else will do. But most of all: ya no eres un pobre muerto de hambre sin donde cayerte muerto. (302)

No, you are alive. And in the context of the working-poor and working-class jobs the narrator lists, the repetition of and insistence on, "you're not," becomes, paradoxically, a highly political affirmation of existence. The negative invocation of the anonymous "somebody that does what no one else will do," grounds the BG politically through its reference to the political and economic discursive commonplace ubiquitous in immigration policy reform: who else will do these jobs?

The five thousand ranch hands and day laborers who crowd the dance floor of the Lava County fairground's exhibition hall reject the terms of subjection that ground U.S.-Mexican political economies that have compelled their migration in the first place. Instead, they articulate their own political subjectivity through the musical tradition that creates a space for a shared Greater Mexican affect defined by the idea of the gran baile itself.

The gran baile thus represents a form and performance of listening that emphasizes movement and sociality. The gran baile implicitly calls upon the sociality of a musical event in the sense that social contracts and conventions—what I discuss throughout this chapter as the cultural logics of various musical traditions—govern the repertoires of physical motion available to a group in the presence of sound. Beyond the repertoires available to the characters, however, they can—and do—draw on multiple repertoires of movement to re-member and re-invent the cultural and political potential of spaces (as they are) transformed by sound. The non-discursive spaces of dance that compel movement articulate a structure of feeling, or sentimiento, particular to the intercontextual encounters of Mexican migration. It is the translation of feeling into movement, into the affective current generated by multiple bodies in motion—or in the even more electric movement of one body feeling itself becoming in motion—all sharing an experience of listening. The fear, anxiety, excitement, and pleasure engendered in the moment that a dancer spins his/her partner out, the precarious moment in which every dancer risks losing the other and losing him/herself; in the space of that moment lives sentimiento.

Instead of desire or longing being subject to the control of political economy, sentimiento exceeds postmodern, globalized economic structures. The shared desire that constitutes an immeasurable and unmeasured power is dynamic in its response to material

conditions such that it appropriates cultural productions into its affective structure. According to Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, "If in fact affect constructs value from below, if it transforms it according to the rhythm of what is common, and if it appropriates the conditions of its own realization, then it is more than evidence that in all of this there resides an expansive power" (86). That power extends across the borders of potential economies of desire as a surplus or excess, an accumulation that mirrors the accumulative structure of *Caramba*. In other words, a single form—text-based narrative, song, image—cannot encompass, cannot contain, the longing and desire that constitute sentimiento's power to transform material exigencies (of labor, of migration, of sexuality and gender expression) and material culture into a shared experience of "home."

Sentimiento's power in this sense is comparable to the transformative process by which Don Pancho achieves his Heavenly home. Indeed, in many ways Purgatory is like the United States, where the Saints and Angels force the residents to learn English and where everything is white. But the work does not end when Don Pancho reaches Heaven; as at the Baile Grande, home-making is work, but it also requires a familiarity with the rules and contours of performance. After DP's initial surprise at the beauty and elegance of "[h]is very own rancho with plenty of land," he must perform a miracle that will define his saintly specialty. With his mentor, Jesus Malverde, "Patron Saint of Drug Traffickers and Other Criminals," Don Pancho quite literally performs his first miracle to an audience of onlookers who "want more than drinking, or dancing. They want a good show!" (161). After filling Don Eusebio's request for another tequila and Doña Ruthi's pleas to correct the dye job that left her hair fried and orange, Don Pancho is named, "El Santo Patrón de los Borrachos y las Putas." DP's sacrifice for the lush life of el vaquero in the barrio of Heaven for those who "wanted things to be just like in an old Mexican

cowboy movie," is to answer the pleas of drunks and whores, whose desire he can most feel (158).

II. Hymns, Serenatas, and Storied Romance

That Don Pancho, the novel's patriarch, must learn the rules of Heaven and accord with Its division of labor before enjoying Its fruits suggests the logic through which gender roles must be navigated in the spaces of belonging carved out by sentimiento. The norteño example of "Los dos plebes," the heteronormative space of the Baile Grande, and Don Pancho's desires both before and after death as well as ascension all reveal gendered ideals of performance encoded in the logics of Mexican musical performance, the metonym for which is the mariachi serenata. Indeed, Lucha and Javier's relationship revolves around the ubiquity in Lava Landing of the mariachi serenata, a ubiquity all the more pronounced by Martínez's inclusion of a visual signifier of on the novel's title page. The image positions the actors in the performance of the serenata in accordance with the maintenance of distance between singer and listener, with a heteronormative structure in which the man sings and plays while the woman remains in the window, and with a certain class structure evident not only in the woman's stillness (her apparently stoic gaze) but also in the domestic structure itself, which appears to be at least two stories, whitewashed, and possessed of an enclosed veranda. Taking, for the moment, this image at face value, it suggests a foundation for social organization in Lava Landing that privileges, or centers, each of these characteristics. In fact, Lava Landing is literally founded on the serenata in the sense that residents believe the songs to be responsible for the dormancy of the nearby volcano, El Condenado. "[S]ince [Lava Landing's predecessor] San Narciso was a town full of beautiful women and the men naturally spent their spare time serenading them," the narrator historicizes, "the people

came to believe that it was all the serenatas that had eventually lulled the volcano to sleep" (52). Because, "[l]ike its predecessor, Lava Landing was known for two things: pretty women and mariachis," the serenatas incorporate not only the social and physical positioning of bodies in the ways indicated by the title image, but also the traditions of mariachi, cast throughout the novel as the most macho of traditions. As Mexico's internationally recognized official mode of musical performance, mariachi's prevalence in Lava Landing implicitly recalls the dialectical relationship between chicanidad and Mexicanidad that I discuss in chapter two, but it also implies a continuity between the Mexican pueblo of San Narciso and the U.S. border city of Lava Landing. Though the name has been Anglicized and the terms of citizenship have shifted, the cultural practices and social mores of the town, this narrative suggests, remain Mexican.

It also suggests that cultural expression is performed along gendered, specifically heteronormative, lines. Reflecting the gendering of the population above—pretty women and mariachis—at several moments in the novel, the narrator and characters confirm (ironically, as we will see) that "there is nothing more macho than a mariachi" (94). The deep embeddedness of machismo in the logic of mariachi emerges from its social history with its various modes of performance, of which the serenata is only one. Nevertheless, the song perhaps most representative of mariachi on the jukebox, "La Serenata Huasteca" (so widely recognized a part of the repertoire that it need not even an artist's name associated with it), offers a clue as to this particular type of performance. As the song begins, accompanied by the huapango rhythms characteristic of the Huastec region of northeastern Mexico, the singer begins, "Canto al pie de tu ventana / Pa' que sepas que te quiero."[82] The listener hears in these first two lines the lyrical rendition of the image with

[82] "I sing standing at your window / So that you'll know that I love you"

which readers are by now already familiar, and one on which Martínez continues to capitalize in her rendering of Lucha and Javier as mariachi listeners.

The familiarity of the image, reinforced by the positioning of the figures in the title image, is precisely what indicates its transmission of cultural and gendered mores; its seeming naturalness, that is, begs the question: what is the process through which this engendering of space through bodies and sound inheres in the logic of the mariachi serenata performance? One answer lies in the distinction that "Serenata Huasteca" makes between *cantando al pie* and being confined behind (even if leaning out of) *tu ventana*. Listening to mariachi serenatas, the song suggests, requires a certain stasis that suspends the balance of desire in the distance between listener and singer.

The mariachi, on the other hand, with a cohort of violin-, trumpet-, and vihuela-, and/or guitarrón-playing paisanos, relies on movement. Whether playing "al talon"[83] from table to table in a restaurant or playing a series of chambas[84] at fiestas, weddings, and quinceañeras, mariachi performance depends upon access to a broad musical repertoire in order to meet the needs and expectations of various audiences.[85] That access comes only with exposure, and that exposure comes only with the (privileged) ability to move in and among various social and public spheres. The mariachi's reliance upon freedom of movement emerges, at least in part, from its professional and social history. Before becoming Mexico's national musical style, many musicians were forced, out of economic necessity, to travel from hacienda to hacienda, placita to placita, or fiesta to fiesta to make ends meet. Economic necessity, however, translated into an expansion of

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[83] "hoofing it"

[84] gigs

[85] Daniel Sheehy identifies the serenata as one form of chamba: "For the mariachi, the *serenata* is a popular type of *chamba* that accommodates clients desiring a short serenade to mark a special occasion, rather than an hour or more of music. *Serenatas* may . . . consist of seven or eight pieces and be about a half-hour in duration" (98).

the repertoire, which, in turn, meant greater access to public spaces, which eventually included recording studios.

Thus, in an iterative logic that depends to a certain extent on pre-existing gender norms, mariachi machismo emerges from a conversion of the necessity of migration into a celebration of the freedom of movement.[86] But as the serenata demonstrates, defining masculinity according to access to the wide, open spaces of the public sphere means, by contrast, defining the feminine Other as fixed in place. She is limited to the domestic sphere, and it is frequently when she transgresses the boundaries of that space that she becomes la traicionera, as in Tomás Méndez Sosa's version of "Puñalada Trapera" or la puta, like Doña Ruthi pleading to Don Pancho.[87] The ideal serenata listener in this scenario, mediated by the distance between herself and the singer, is passive and immobile, allowing the melodic sounds of desire to float along the space that divides man from woman. Bounded by the bodies and minds that make meaningful the sounds of la serenata, the space transforms in the presence of the song to a site full of discursive and affective possibility. Obscuring the many choices the woman must make and actions she must take to get to the window after she hears the serenata, the title image that inaugurates readers' familiarity with the space presents an ideal serenata scenario.

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[86] This is also, I hypothesize, one of the links to the charreada, wherein that movement and freedom are performed in an enclosed space. For a feminist analysis of ranchera that discusses the influence of the charreada on women performers' clothing choices, see Najera-Ramírez, "Unruly Passions."

[87] Only very recently have women been able to enter mariachi on the same footing as men. Laura Sobrino, director of the first all-woman mariachi in the United States, Mariachi La Reyna de Los Angeles, suggests, for instance, that mariachis mujeres must battle the prevailing notion that they cannot achieve the same level of musical virtuosity as their male counterparts. In a 1995 interview with *Los Angeles Times* reporter Michael Quintanilla, Sobrino maintains, "We are bringing a new perspective to the music. [. . .] A new direction. A new future. I think when people come to our shows, they say, 'Oh boy, we're going to see a bunch of pretty women and hopefully they'll do something cute.' They don't think of us as mariachis. Then after a show, they say, 'You are mariachis!' And I say, 'Yes, we are.'" Even the founder of Mariachi La Reyna and director of Mariachi Sol de México, José Hernández, remembers men coming up to him, saying, "If you close your eyes, they sound just like guys."

Ideally, the longing and desire of the song will bend, as though magnetically, the ineluctably listening woman to the will of the singing mariachi.

That ideal, however, remains untenable in Lava Landing, where the characters, though certainly familiar with the ideal logics of musical performance and listening, translate those romantic ideals to everyday practices. As it parodies the serenata performance in the introduction of Javier to Lucha—when Javier y su Mariachi de Dos Nacimientos go on a soul-saving mission to the Lava County Women's Correctional Facility—*Caramba* depicts the listeners as transgressors of the serenata's tacit hetero-social contract; their movement beyond the bounds of the domestic sphere (out of the window) has led to an imposed re-placement of the bars on the window with the bars of a jail cell. In paralleling the romantic confinement of the serenata with the social confinement of a prison (which, in turn, parallels the Don Pancho's imprisonment in Purgatory), the narrator makes a direct analogy to Mexican film, comparing the women staring at the Born-Again Christian Mariachi through the bars of their cells to the beautiful young women of Mexican movies. The nostalgic scene of the young girl placing her forehead against the bars on her window "so as not to fall over from flattery or love, which, in certain manifestations, are the same thing anyway," is abruptly banished as the narrator brings us back to reality: "It was in a similar fashion that the detainees at the Lava County Women's Correctional Facility embraced their bars, albeit for a different reason. . . . The women wanted to see what kind of weirdness had come through their front door" (26). Mariachi de Dos Nacimientos' "weirdness" stems in large part from their awkward juxtaposition of a musical repertory limited to three Protestant hymns—"Jesus Loves Me," "Just a Closer Walk With Thee," and "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands"—but expanded by their interpretive abilities; they could sing each of the three songs in "Spanish, English, and Spanglish, and to a variety of different rhythms

including, but not limited to, huapango, son, bolero, and jarocho" (26). Indeed, it is the mariachis' musical styling and their interpretive ability that transports the women to a state of almost ecstatic frenzy that cannot be controlled by either their cells or the mariachis' redemptive mission. Demonstrating the emotive excess of the mariachi music—sacred or profane—the women begin shouting gritos, banging on their bars with spoons, and kissing and dancing with each other when "the music acted as an aphrodisiac" (27).

It is in this setting that Lucha, figured as La Sirena [the siren], is introduced as the singing voice that lures Javier away from his mission. After echando un grito bien sentido[88], Lucha requests that the mariachi play, "Bonito Tecalitlán." As Javier and his men, against their better judgment, begin to play the secular song, the narrator explains, "the music reminded her of her hometown, a place she hadn't seen since the age of nine, more than fifteen years earlier" (28). As Lucha belts out the song's second verse, she pulls Javier under her influence, eroding his spiritual and emotional resolve at least as much as her refusal to passively listen erodes the maintenance of the space engendered in serenata performance. Indeed, her singing denatures the space so effectively that with a few coy bats of her eyelashes, she calls him to her cell and proceeds to obtain his consent to sign for her on her scheduled release from the correctional facility. Not only denaturing the space but denaturalizing the gender roles the distance kept in place, Lucha reverses the sexual politics of the ideal serenata. Lucha, "no connoisseur of mariachi, but [with] a working knowledge and a commensurate appreciation for the classics," demonstrates her awareness of the dynamic of bodily movement involved in listening to the mariachi serenata and exploits her place in its logic for her own benefit.

[88] Throwing out a heartfelt yell.

"Bonito Tecalitlán" serves as more than a reminder of Lucha's hometown; it places her. The song, that is, positions Lucha as a listener imbricated in the cultural logic of mariachi performance since Tecalitlán is widely considered the birthplace of mariachi.[89] Though she left Jalisco fifteen years earlier, her experiences there were formative. Her "working knowledge," then, includes a critical understanding of the sexual and gender politics of mariachi because they are also those of her home. She was raised in accordance with mariachi's values and forced to become a woman by negotiating its logics. Lucha manipulates her "fixed" position as the serenaded and wooed (note the passivity) woman in the window in order to fulfill, which also means to express, her own desires. Lucha's education is one, first, in discipline and, second, in negotiation. We learn, for instance, that "[w]hen Lucha was a little girl, she was always having her hand slapped for sneaking into the candy jar. As adolescence set in, Lucha began to feel like the candy jar—everywhere she went, men were reaching out for her as if she were filled with orange slices and marshmallow circus peanuts, Lucha's favorites" (32). The young Lucha apprehends through experience that interdictions to desire and fulfillment thereof apply differently to men and women when she "solve[s] both problems with a single sudden insight. [She] learned how to get what was inside of the candy jar, by posing as the candy jar" (page Number). With this recognition, Lucha's education in opportunistic listening is complete. She learns to listen for the rules governing appropriate behavior, rules, in this case, encoded in the gendered logics of the mariachi serenata, in order to then break them such that they will suit her interests.

More important than the rule-breaking or bending, however, is her implicit recognition that the rules were never meant to suit her interests in the first place.

[89] Although this is a contested claim, it is founded on an understanding of the state of Jalisco as the uncontested cradle of mariachi music and the fact that the first recognized mariachi ensemble, Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán, was founded by Don Gaspar Vargas in 1898.

Apprehending the logic of a cultural-narrative economy that benefits the men who reached out for her like candy means that Lucha also understands that the stories and songs fail to account for her as a young, working-class, Mexicana *desiring subject*. Thus, by "becoming the candy jar," she turns this cultural-narrative economy on its head, valuing her body as an agent of labor rather than the fruit of a man's leisure. Notably, her mother, the widowed Violeta, castigates Lucha for her behavior until "Doña Violeta saw all of the pork, beef, poultry, and fish products Lucha brought home . . . She was grateful for this small relief" (33). As a model of disidentificatory listening, Lucha's transgression of the physical boundaries of the serenata dramatizes marginalized listeners' ability to engage the pleasurable aspects of musical performance even while rejecting its grounding ideologies and consequent policing of physicality (a bourgeois privilege inaccessible to Lucha even if she were to embrace it in practice).

Moreover, Lucha demonstrates the extent to which the logics of belonging in everyday practice are founded not just on the songs, whatever their guiding sentimiento may be, but also on what listeners do with them. Because in practice serenatas do require agency, passivity becomes an unobtainable ideal, a fact that Lucha ultimately has to teach the idealistic Javier. As opposed to Lucha, for whom feminine desire developed in the crucible of mariachi culture, Javier's distanced and mediated experience of mariachi determines his own understanding of gender, which is not wholly in accordance with mariachi norms. But the naïve Javier reflects neither on the logic of mariachi listening nor on the romantic film narratives that Martínez parodies in their dissemination of an ideal serenata performance. That failure to reflect, though, does not mean that he does not also position himself in the stories the songs transmit. Indeed, it is precisely because he assumes the heroic role of the masculine singing charro, along with the soul-saving missionary, that he fails to identify the fissures in the stories themselves or his particular

subversion of them. The narrator explains, for instance, that "[t]he only male guidance the young Javier got came to him through his record player and his Bible" (20), and his mother, Lulabell, remembers his "first genuine smile was provoked by Jorge Negrete singing '¡Ay! Jalisco No Te Rajes' over the AM radio" (19). The pleasure that Javier derives from this song—a pleasure, I would suggest, indissociable from his boyish identification with the baritone of Negrete's voice—comes not only from its teaching him to "be proud of where he was coming from," but also his implicit understanding that his sanctioned cultural role is to protect the integrity of his home and community, much like the state of Jalisco should "not back down" and protect "su novia," the capital city of Guadalajara. In concert with his religious education, he unites the mariachi with the missionary in order to carry out that protective, paternalistic role, which is, after all, the safest expression of the pleasurable play of desire and identification through which he listens.

That the other male role model in Javier's life is Jesus, on the other hand, suggests a similar kind of protective stance, but one paradoxically founded on a juvenile identification with Christ, the perpetual Son. Although Mariachi de Dos Nacimientos enlivens it by placing it in a mariachi tradition, "Jesus Loves Me" comes from a children's song tradition evident not only in its publication history—a voice and organ teacher named William Bradbury composed the melody of the song for children whose fathers were on the battlefield during the Civil War—but also in its professed faith for the authority of the Bible.[90] For Javier, "this I know / for the Bible tells me so" makes Jesus' love self-evident; he need not look further than the Biblical proclamation. However, the play of desire and identification in this particular song evidences his desire to belong as

[90] For a brief composition history of the hymn, see Ace Collins's *Turn Your Radio On: The Stories Behind Gospel Music's All-Time Greatest Songs* (138-140).

Javier remains the "little one," little son, whom "to Him belongs." Moreover, the protective/paternal-eternal boy dialectic resounds in that "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands," for Javier takes seriously the charge makes the Son responsible for "everybody here . . . everybody there . . . everybody everywhere."

Hence, the soul-saving mission at the Lava County Women's Correctional Facility, where Martínez ironically recasts (literally and figuratively) the traditional gender dynamic of the mariachi serenata. Following the expectations created by the mariachi performance and his faith in his—and His—protective abilities, Javier fully expects that the Mariachi de Dos Nacimientos will win over the inmates' lost souls. Indeed, when he arrives to pick Lucha up from prison, he views it as an opportunity to continue the mission by focusing on her salvation alone. Losing no time he takes her directly from prison to church, where she enacts a rebirth indicative of her own vast store of cultural/religious knowledge: "Lucha threw herself to the floor, then crawled to the large crucifix at the head of the church. She begged the Lord to accept her as one of His children and to forgive her sins, which were many and varied" (56). A master of performance and the cultural knowledge it entails, Lucha thus convinces Javier that he has succeeded as both a mariachi and a missionary, as she finalizes the performance with a moving rendition of "Just a Closer Walk With Thee." The desire in the pleading gospel song creates a moment of identification between Javier and Lucha, who fully demonstrates her disidentificatory listening practices as she leads the congregation in a song that manifests her sexual desire for Javier.

This moment of identification, where Javier hears Lucha sharing in his devoted call for salvation, leads to his continued desire to save her soul. But Lucha returns to her chola ways when outside of Javier's view. Indeed, when Javier serenades her next, not only is Lucha "looking just like a 1980s lowrider queen . . . [w]ith her halter top, her

chinos bien baggy, her black bracelets spider-webbing up her wrists, and a pair of Mary Janes," her "carnal" Joaquín is crouched down in his boxers, hiding from what he believes to be an entire mariachi. Javier, faithful to the wisdom of his protective mission as well as the serenata's gendered division of labor, abides by its logic to the bitter end never realizing that the roles have been reversed. What Javier expects to happen based on the ideals of mariachi masculinity and the transmission of that cultural knowledge through film, is never quite realized in the world of the novel. Instead of Javier getting the girl, Lucha continually eludes him.

Lucha makes this perfectly clear in the final serenata scene, which self-consciously draws on the song and movie *La hija de nadie*. Leading up to his final serenade, Lulabell has divulged to Lucha that she may very well be Javier's half-sister, a secret that makes Javier all the more attractive to the coca-dealing chola, for Javier's transformation from the missionary brother to the blood-brother makes him an exciting conquest. After an evening of roller-skating at "Christian Music Night at the Lava Landing Roller Palace," Lucha convinces Javier that in order to get her soul, he must take her body first (233). Just as she reversed the gender roles of the serenata in prison and condensed the space that suspends desire between singer and listener, she now reverses the conventionally ordained order of events by which Javier should save her, in the Biblical sense. The success of her reasoning and the possibility for agreement has been facilitated in part by his assimilation of her sexual needs into spiritual needs and in part by his association of the pleasure of her touch with memories from childhood, though narratively the latter leads to the former. When Lucha touches his cheek, Javier thinks nostalgically of "the sound of mariachi music coming from his Fisher-Price® record player [and] the smell of Lulabell's shawl as he laid his head on her shoulder to fall asleep" (234). That Lucha's violation of the bounds of appropriate physical distance

should remind Javier of both mariachi and his mother is not surprising since each constitutes a channel of cultural expression and taboo through which he identifies the process of becoming a man. In other words, Lucha's touch, her sensual if not explicitly sexual advances, remind him of being a man-in-the-making, the expectations of the son to grow into lo puro macho mariachi.

At the same time, this revelation of the material means through which Javier heard and appreciated mariachi music also reveals why he never embodied *that* particular form of machismo. The pleasure he derives from listening to mariachi is always mediated by a boyhood innocence as represented by the plastic playback of "home" (where he was coming from) and "macho" (Jorge Negrete's baritone voice) on the Fisher-Price record player. As opposed to Lucha, whose lived experience guides her negotiation of gender politics to enable her to move out from behind the window, Javier's equation of desire with the record player's sonic transmission of mariachi actually ties him to one place: his mother's house.

It is, in fact, only after Lucha seduces him that he begins to apprehend the intrinsic value of movement and migration for attainment of a masculine ideal. In keeping with his role as the masculine defender of female virtue, Javier's only means of accounting for Lucha's seductive opportunism at this place in the narrative is to reason with her that the physical delights of sex will ultimately enable him to bring her closer to the spiritual light of the Lord. If he must give up the pleasure of boyhood innocence as it mediates mariachi machismo, he nevertheless clings to the spiritual innocence of the missionary. As they make love (ironically, not in the missionary position, as Lucha characteristically assumes the position of control), he imagines her soul "changing from one form of matter into another. It began as a deep pink, almost red colored liquid, then solidified into the most beautiful shape he had ever seen—a hybrid between a rose and

heart" (243). With eyes firmly closed, Javier's deeply erotic vaginal imaginings remain Platonic as Lucha's "soul" turns from a solid to a gas, enabling it to "climb toward the sky, stopping occasionally to rest along the way, allowing Javier to get a good look at it in all its beauty, before it resumed its flight toward the heavens . . . Once it got there, it was blown to bits by a single sudden burst as it became one with God." Though he assimilates even the intensity of his first sexual experience into a Christian religious narrative, the "single sudden burst" of Lucha's soul mirrors the chaos into which his masculinity has been thrown.

When Lulabell discovers that Javier has spent the night with Lucha, she reveals to him that the young lovers may be siblings, leading to the "hija de nadie" serenata. In the context of Javier's imaginings as he stands at Lucha's window, the narrator describes that *La hija de nadie* follows a similar plotline. When the twins, Yolanda and Inés, are born, their father abandons them and their mother, taking his son with him. "Yolanda and Inés," *Caramba*'s narrator editorializes, "grow up poor in Mexico, without the benefit of a father, in a time and place where having one's father is such a give, the children at school make fun of them because theirs isn't around" (296). Eventually, all parties end up in the United States, where Inés falls in love with the gardener only to learn that they are, in fact, estranged siblings. "Ashamed of their unspeakable sin," the narrator concludes, "and well aware that their illicit love affair can't go on, they kill themselves leaving Yolandita all alone in the cruel, cruel world with nothing to do but sing about it." Remembering the song and film in the context of his imagining a serenade to Lucha not with a love-song but with a tragi-corrido in which the two would meet the same ill-fated end, Javier shows all his cards when he says, "I wanted us to live happily ever after, para siempre" (297).

Lucha ultimately shatters Javier's dreamy illusion, his shifting ideal of happily ever after when, closing her eyes and inhaling deeply from her Marlboro Red, she asks, "¿What do I want with happily ever after? It's Saturday night and I am going to the Baile Grande. By myself" (297). Though perhaps not a "connoisseur," Lucha listens closely enough to recognize the implicit ideological content of mariachi, its adherence to a careful dance of distance and proximity, calculated to sustain the singer's desire at the expense of the listener's. Apprehending the roles implicit in the songs and the narratives that define cultural belonging in either Lava Landing or her home state of Jalisco, Lucha continually exceeds the bounds of decorum that forbid her from desiring what the hero gets.

Ironically, only in his encounter with Lucha's disidentificatory practice of mariachi listening does Javier glean the experiential basis for machismo in mariachi performance, which also means a more critical awareness of the role of femininity in the logic of mariachi listening. By novel's end he lives out the vagabond musician's freedom to roam, as he travels to Mexico with no particular final destination in mind. Armed with Lulabell's map of Mexican masculinities, Javier goes to Mexico "to solve the riddle of what it means to be a man" (329). Whether he locates his masculinity in Mexico or in the roaming itself is left ambiguous; in either case, however, he has become a subject defined by a longing for an unachievable ideal of masculinity. But before he goes, looking longingly at Lucha for the last time, he realizes "that what he knew about women was just as brief and enigmatic as any one of the 150 Psalms . . . His musings were permeated by a dab of agnostic wisdom. Con los cantos de la sirena no te vayas a marear. With the songs of the siren, you won't set sail. Number six of the game La Lotería. Lulabell used to play with Javier. She'd insist that they play. . . . Javier always got nervous when number six came out. His shoulders would tighten. He would cringe" (328). In this

boyhood memory, facilitated rather appropriately by the game according to which the novel is structured, Javier recognizes that his innocence is lost. But the man has gained an insight: even mariachi machos know next to nothing about women. Perhaps it is confrontation with this desire, this absence, this ignorance about the Other that compels the maintenance of distance in the serenata, and, perhaps, the barred windows.

III. Sounding "Out": Mexican Pop and El Show Transvestís

Behind the bars of the Lava County Women's Correctional Facility, the first sign of the women's desecration of Javier's soul-saving mission emerges in their "hoots and hollers," or gritos (Martínez 26). Anyone who has ever tried to sustain the simultaneous pleasure, lament, and longing in the trilled, "Ayyyy, jai, jai, jaaaaaaiiiiiii" of a Mexican grito knows how fulfilling it can be when you do it well (and how difficult it is to execute). The exhilaration of feeling that raw emotion make its way through your vocal chords, vibrating without restraint, your breath passing from the depths of your lungs, filling out in the confined space of your throat and taking shape in sound tells the room, the audience, the musicians, your world in that moment, that you have a voice, a body, that you are alive. Echándole gritos serves the same purpose as writing, speaking, or dancing vis-à-vis listening: it tells your story. As a response to aural stimulation, gritando implies listening. But the yells, particularly as they must sustain the diphthong "ay," transfer the locus of pleasure in listening to the throat, suggesting that the ultimate pleasure in listening is feeling the grain of your own voice.[91]

[91] See Barthes, who positions the "grain of the voice" in its embodiment: "The 'grain,'" he avers, "is the body in the voice as it sings, the hand as it writes, the limb as it performs. If I perceive the 'grain' in a piece of music and accord this 'grain' a theoretical value (the emergence of the text in the work), I inevitably set up a new scheme of evaluation which will certainly be individual—I am determined to listen to my relation with the body of the man or woman singing or playing and that relation is erotic" (299). Though Barthes goes on to suggest that the eros implied in the physical relation between voice and listening is about the loss, through expression, of subjectivity (in a psychoanalytic sense), combining his theory of the "grain"

In the Mexican pop songs that Martínez includes on the Rockola, Juan Gabriel's "Querida"[92] in particular, the thrill of the voice is not only about pleasure; the stakes of locating the site of listening pleasure in the throat and vocal chords is a matter of survival.[93] Mexican pop instantiates the maintenance of desire not through distance, as with the serenata, but through proximity to the trace of embodiment in the pop diva/o's voice. Moreover, as a mass-mediated form rather than a singular address, pop music implies the bodies of fans longing to hear and reciprocate the longing of the singer's voice. From youth, Juan Gabriel's voice captivated his various audiences and became his means of survival while growing up orphaned on the streets of Ciudad Juárez, far from the rural home from which his family, the Aguileras (a newly single mother with ten children), had migrated in search of economic security (Espinosa 84-86). Having been abandoned by his mother, Victoria, at the age of six, perhaps young Alberto Aguilera (Juan Gabriel's given name) sought in the pleasures of the voice the kind of maternal comfort that Wayne Koestenbaum describes as the purview of listening: "Listening, we are the ideal mother ('mother' as idea) attending to the baby's cries, alert to its puling inscriptions, and we are the baby listening to the mother for signs of affection and attention, for reciprocity, for world" (33). Evidencing his strategic abilities to self-soothe and, thereby, to survive, the young Alberto performs both voice and listener, concentrating in the power and pleasure of his throat, the reciprocity, the world-making of both parent and child. In the sense that even in his youth, Aguilar's emergent voice conveys the feelings and experiences of someone "tan chavalón," so young and already

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with a theory of the "grito" as each involves listening, sets up a reciprocal subjectivity, one that opens up to the other/Other without a loss of the self.

[92] "Beloved"

[93] The other group that I have classified as Mexican pop from the selections on the Rockola is Los Angeles Negros. Originally from Chile, the group permanently settled in Mexico City when their success launched them to international recognition in the 1970s, a move that implicitly recognizes Mexico's hegemony in the Latin American music industry.

so world-wise, the up-and-coming "divo de Juárez" also complicates the classed assumptions of Koestenbaum's study of "the queen's throat." Though he creates himself through his voice, thereby achieving the ultimate diva listener's goal of becoming (a self through) the diva/o voice, his cultivation of a practice of listening for survival emerged in response to the dangers of making it on the streets of Juárez.

Placing Juan Gabriel's beginnings (as Adán Luna) in bars like Juárez's El Noa Noa, though, also set the stage for his adherence to a pop aesthetic characterized not only by mass audiences but also by quicker beats and rock instruments that included drums, electric guitars, and synthesizers. The combination of the awesome power of his voice with the rhythmic structure of the "refried" rock ballad brings to divo performance a decidedly Mexican and working-class sensibility. Moreover, a song like "Querida," where Juanga, as he is affectionately known by his fans, showcases the extent to which his voice traces an affective strain of survival and power over the rigid four-on-the-floor beat, also queers the tradition of "typical Mexican music" that includes ranchera and mariachi performance.[94] That the trumpets' intermittent staccato blasts and the tambourine's percussive beats all adhere to the rhythm over which Juanga all but sobs the repeated "mira a mi soledad, mira a mi soledad,"[95] makes evident what Deborah Paredez argues in another context, namely that the song "shares [a] queer dialectic of lyrical longing and conditioning beat" (55). This queering of Mexican music, which of course implies the queering of the gender dynamic implicit in, for instance, the serenata, opens a space on the Rockola and, in turn, in Lava Landing, for the performance of a queer listening practice that performs a similar dialectic of voice and silence.

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[94] Although, his most recent self-titled release (2010) turns to mariachi in celebration of Mexico's bicentennial.

[95] "look at my loneliness"

In other words, that Juan Gabriel's voice becomes a technique of survival suggests that not to speak, yell, or sing, is not only to suppress the pleasure of the "grain" of the voice; silence in the queer community carries the specter of death. Indeed, describing a scene of lip-syncing, Koestenbaum reminds of the stakes of voice in queer culture: "In the era of Silence = Death, the opera queen's silence is freighted with fatality. The silent opera queen . . . is an image of gay helplessness, the persistence of the closet, and a tragic inability to awaken the body politic" (45). On the other hand, as has been the case with Juan Gabriel, the gay voice can also launch a hyperaudibility of rumors and innuendo that provokes the continued inaudibility of the closet.[96] This hyperaudible-inaudible dialectic—a version of the hypervisible-invisible situation of, for instance, the Latin American immigrant community—structures the performance of queer listening, as embodied by the transgender salon-owner, True-Dee Spreckles.

Instead of the Big Five-Four, where "Querida" is housed on the Rockola, True-Dee's performance takes place, rather appropriately, at El Aguantador (the one who remains or endures). In keeping with its name, El Aguantador provides a permanent site for the re-creation of community, though the contours of that community might change on a nightly basis as the cantina offers a series of shows and contests through which performers practice physical and affective techniques of belonging. Those techniques emerge in the material practices of Lava Landing's particular transnational style of

[96] According to Univisión.com's "Entretenimiento," Juanga announced in the fall of 2010 that he and his partner/protégé, Spanish singer Jaz Bael, had plans to wed under Mexico's newly-reinforced recognition of same-sex marriage. See "¡Juan Gabriel podría casarse con el cantante Jaz Bael!" among many other entertainment and gossip-oriented stories carrying the announcement. The story broke, however, after forty years of rumors about Juanga's dubious masculinity. Alfredo Espinosa even documents a case, "real o ficticia [true or false]," in which the visiting King of Spain, Juan Carlos, asked then-president, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, "¿está usted seguro que Juan Gabriel representa a la canción bravía mexicana? [are you sure that Juan Gabriel represents the fierce (i.e., masculine) Mexican song (tradition)?]" (104). Even international dignitaries, it seems, are not immune to the hyperaudible-inaudible dialectic to which Juanga's voice "awakens the body politic." On the work of rumors in queer communities, see also Paredez (170).

vaquerismo and compadrazgo/comadrazgo as evoked in this description of El Aguantador:

> the Mexican dance club/bar/taquería in town with the mechanical bull, smiles that yielded gold- and silver-capped teeth, beer posters with dark-skinned beauties, men with cowboy boots and hats, fancy belts, jeans, and gold jewelry, women with rayon dresses, long curly hair, or las chicas vaqueras with the pantalones Wrangler®, fancy belts and boots, just like their male counterparts, except for the frilly blouses, a banda, a conjunto norteño, a grupo, mariachis that sometimes showed up and sometimes didn't, video screens showing cockfights and rodeos, un show transvestís, y un bikini show. . . . At El Aguantador you could win the cumbia, quebradita, hombre más sexy, or the Million Dollar Legs contest, depending on the day of the week, or where your talents lay. (69)

Through each performance, many of which rely on strict gender expectations, El Aguantador becomes a site for the practice of belonging. However, couched surreptitiously between the displays of hypermasculinity on the televised cockfights and rodeos and the baring of women's skin in a display of feminine sexuality in the bikini show, el show transvestís signals the queer potential of the space.

The potential becomes audible in the drag performers' turn to Mexican pop divas like Laura León, Paulina Rubio, and, True-Dee's persona for the Tuesday night show to which Martínez invites readers, Thalía. The play of voice and silence structures True-Dee's performance as she lip-syncs Thalía's hit song, "Amor a la mexicana." Thalía's disembodied voice, played back over the loudspeaker, inhabits True-Dee as she lip-syncs the song signaling her simultaneous embodiment of the desiring subject and the desired object. Indeed, True-Dee's surrogate embodiment of Thalía's voice renders the performer's entire body a resonant (w)hole, not empty but full of becoming-woman. That is, in the sense that for the duration of her performance, True-Dee becomes everything that Thalía represents—a beautiful, successful, cosmopolitan, and adored Mexicana—the

transgender performer enacts her own desire to be recognized as the woman she feels herself to be.

And she feels herself to model a very particular variety of femininity, as indicated by her commitment to "The Cause," her personal mission to restore femininity to its original (pre-second-wave-feminism) elegance (98). Though devoted to "the Cause," she nevertheless faces the trap of indecision when it comes to whether or not she should get a sex-change operation. As she writes to local advice columnist, "Querida Claudia," "I was born a boy, but I am a woman, but not just any kind of woman. . . . I am a beautiful woman. I hope you don't mind my saying so. Moreover, I am an elegant lady which is so rare in this day and age" (186). As a beautiful, successful woman blessed with domestic as well as creative talents, True-Dee has attracted scores of men, but as she writes, "getting a man and keeping one are two seperate [sic] skills" (187). The "skill" in the latter case involves, for True-Dee, not being able to hide "nature's mistake" (188). The operation appears as though it would be an easy decision given that it offers a means to the end of fulfilling her ambition to live a romantically satisfying life. However, to undergo the operation would mean that she would no longer derive pleasure from sex. Like so many women trapped in the virgen/puta dichotomy, she would have to trade "achieving complete sexual gratification" (189) for "keeping a man" (187). That becoming a woman involves choosing one over the other underscores the extent to which True-Dee's decision risks inscribing her into a patriarchal standard that polices the behavioral bounds of femininity.

As True-Dee performs Thalía at the show transvestís, the play of voice and silence entailed in lip-syncing serves as a metaphor for the consequences of her decision. On one hand, while embodying Thalía, she can luxuriate in her femininity and enjoy the attention of the men in the audience; the performance allows her to experience the same

kind of becoming-woman that the surgery would grant. On the other hand, just as the surgery would prevent her from experiencing sexual pleasure, during her performance the very silence of her voice denies her the vocal pleasures, the throatiness and vibrato, of sounding "out."[97] Indeed, the silence of True-Dee's own voice during the performance signals the silence she would have to endure if she does not get the surgery, a forced silence (don't ask, don't tell) that makes True-Dee vulnerable to the dangers—abuse, death, rape—of the heteronormative maintenance of the closet, or, in True-Dee's case as we will see, of going underground.

That silencing impulse also pervades Nat and Sway's description of the audience at El Aguantador for the show transvestís, an audience already queered by the very space, which is, in turn, queered by the drag show. True-Dee places in relief the girls' assumptions about Mexican masculinity in a performance of listening, implied in her embodiment of Thalía, which exceeds even the strictures of diva-audience decorum. That is, True-Dee capitalizes on the potential affective excesses of live performance at the same time that she transgresses the maintenance of the divide that divas like Thalía keep between themselves and the audience. For instance, "When the instrumental of the song arrived, True-Dee writhed her way over to the audience and got up close with a middle-aged man in a silky, yellow western-tailored shirt. True-Dee looked him in the eye, dipped two fingertips into her panties, removed the ostrich feather fan that rested there, then began to wave it directly in front of his face" (71). True-Dee's audience interactions not only add to the sensuality of her performance, they register an intentionality and an agency made evident by the fan tucked into her panties before the show. By looking the viewer in the eye, she also affirms her control over the performer-audience dynamic

[97] My immense gratitude to Idzel Jaimes Trujillo for calling my attention to the fact that the decision True-Dee faces with the sex-change operation is already metaphorized in the drag show.

while focusing his attention on her face rather than on her body. Because of its silencing effects, not Thalía's voice, but rather True-Dee's physical translation of the act of listening, announces her maintenance of control over the audience. The willfulness of her performance and her decisions to, for example, "cumbi[a] up to the stage where she gave the audience a backside view," indicate that the audience is not listening or watching her silence, her "inability to awaken the body politic," as Koestenbaum might suggest; they are watching precisely not that, as True-Dee dominates the space with her practice of queer(ed) listening (45).

Though silent and non-discursive, in her translation through performance of how *she* listens to Thalía, True-Dee sounds out the incipient pleasure of queer identification, of the potential for queer community. Although Nat and Sway, who along with Lulabell have come to support True-Dee, never seem to understand the gender dynamics of the popularity of the show transvestís among Mexican men, True-Dee's performance evidences the (hetero) normative assumptions that underwrite their confusion. Reflecting on the fact that "[a]ll of the major Mexican bars in the tri-city area that was Lava County had a well-attended show transvestís," Nat and Sway, "had concluded that the only way a woman could be that sexy [i.e., as sexy as the transvestite/transgender performers], and not be called a slut or worse, was either by having her own telenovela, or by being a man" (70). The girls' astute recognition of the power dynamic that governs women's policing of their bodies nevertheless presumes that "Mexican men are amongst the most macho, ¿qué no?" where even the visual signifiers of machismo—the Stetson hats, Wranglers, and western-tailored shirts—are necessarily exclusive of queerness.

True-Dee's performance, particularly her wiggling her way to the man in the silky, yellow western-tailored shirt, suggests her own staging of a queer reading/hearing of the predominantly male audience that complicates the binary Nat and Sway set up.

That is, the macho (i.e., straight) audience of Nat and Sway's imaginings forecloses on the possibility that any member of the audience could be gay, thus relegating them all to the silence of the closet. To imagine, on the contrary, that not only the performers but also the audience queers "Amor a la Mexicana" emphasizes the creation in El Aguantador of a "utopian" queer greater Mexicanidad and, as Ramón Rivera-Servera indicates, thereby "becomes one of the mechanisms through which Latina/o queers negotiate their place and membership [both] within and outside the club" (271).

Yet, it is precisely outside of the club space that True-Dee's inadvertent slip into Thalía's role not as pop diva but telenovela star threatens to affirm the rigidity of heteronormative economies of gender and their attendant policing of decorum. Off-stage, so to speak, True-Dee's desire to embody ideal femininity is only recognized as such by her friends and the regular attendees at el show transvestís, where she actively sounds out. True-Dee encounters another kind of audience at Lulabell's Twelfth Annual Dinner for Ranch Hands and Day Laborers: Juan, who "never attended the Tuesday night event due to a serious telenovela habit which kept him glued to the television set five nights a week" (211). Sporting a Dolly Parton wig and "adopting a cowgirl style, realizing that all ranch hands and a vast majority of day laborers prefer el estilo vaquero" (210), True-Dee captivates Juan despite warnings from his friends that she is "mamápa, part mamacita, part papacito" (211). Seeing True-Dee in her radiant and divine beauty, Juan "no lo pued[e] believe"[98] (220).

His disbelief is warranted and then affirmed when he appears to be living out the telenovela fan's fantasy (in a queer identification reminiscent of Juan Gabriel living out the diva fan's fantasy). After leaving Lulabell's dinner party, Juan takes True-Dee back

[98] "could not believe it"

to the house that he shares with several other migrant laborers. After some brief necking, True-Dee decides to slow things down a bit by cooking for Juan: chorizo con huevos [sausage with eggs]. True-Dee's culinary prowess allows her to queer domesticity in order to announce to Juan "what lay in store" (220). Overly committed to the sign system of telenovelas, however, and in rapt anticipation of finding out "what goes on during strategically timed commercial breaks," Juan fails to read the signs. Alternatively, True-Dee, faithfully re-enacting the silent and non-discursive performance strategies she has cultivated in the club to queer a culinary sign-system, simply cannot account for Juan's dangerous cocktail of obliviousness and anticipation. For in the logic of telenovela romance, with its strict gender codes and heteronormativity, the two ("sausage" and "eggs" on one hand and True-Dee's tender loving ways, on the other) could never be the same thing. But, as Juan soon learns, in the experiences of everyday life, they sometimes are. And as he gets undressed and begins to pull down her panties, he learns what his compadres meant. Seeing her chorizo grow and grow, "Juan screamed, '¡Ay! buey,' and then, just like in the telenovelas, he rolled over sideways and fainted" (223).

Despite Martínez's comic treatment of this scene—with its layers of irony and gender play premised on Juan's adherence to the idealism of the telenovelas—which distances the very real potential for violence attendant to similar situations of transgender exposure, the narrative also recognizes the gravity of True-Dee's "dilemma," to which this scene refers. As such it draws attention to the ways in which her gender-queerness is further silenced by Querida Claudia and then taken literally underground by the Sons and Daughters of San Narciso, a group also known as the "Doomsday Cult." When "Querida Claudia" invites True-Dee to a clandestine meeting, the stylist learns that the supposed Mexicana advice columnist is actually a white (at least ostensibly), male doctor named Larry who also happens to be a devotee of the Doomsday Cult. Convincing her with

promises of the love of its "forward-thinking" inhabitants, Larry persuades True-Dee to move to the underground retreat of the Sons and Daughters of San Narciso. "Down under," he assures her, "you are sure to meet the one that will love you as you are. I am certain of it. ¿How's that for esperanza?" (267).

Once persuaded to move underground, True-Dee, or more precisely her salon, falls prey to the Doomsday Cult's "sacred geography," which locates True-Dee's Tresses as the site through which El Condenado's mounting volcanic pressure needs to be released. As she tells Nat and Sway, "I barely got the secret password before they showed up with a jackhammer and started tearin the place apart" (349). Coincidentally True-Dee had aligned herself with the volcano in her letter to "Querida Claudia," writing, "I am so confused. I feel like a volcano waiting to explode" (188). Whether this line signaled to the cult that True-Dee's Tresses needed to be sacrificed or, alternatively, it was simply fortuitous that True-Dee wrote in the first place to the group that was already scheming on her shop, True-Dee's association with the volcano allows Martínez to address what it means for True- Dee to remain in Lava Landing, in the home she has made for herself. Though, like the volcano, she threatens to irrupt the silence of normativity, also like the volcano, she refuses to move. When, at novel's end, so many of the characters are en route, their returns dubious, True-Dee remains to continue building a home space through queer performance.

By novel's end, Martínez positions True-Dee as both una aguantadora and an "inventress." After emerging from underground, her economic livelihood in shambles, True-Dee hints at the potential for continued home-making with a classed and queered difference when she tells Nat and Sway that when the Sons and Daughters of San Narciso "got done, the only thing left standin was my clientele" (349). In her rendition of events, though threatened and violently disrupted, the work of grooming others according to her

ideals continues in the bodies of women like Natalie and Consuelo. Moreover, after hearing her story, Nat and Sway surprise True-Dee with an offer to finance her "Hair Growth Accelerators," an invention she had been concocting since the beginning of the novel. True-Dee's new beginning, a rebirth made possible through her own labor of self-fashioning, marks her as one who, tied to the land through her association with the volcano, continually reinvents the sociality of silence and voice to invoke the queer potential of Lava Landing.

Like the play of inaudibility-hyperaudibility encoded in the Mexican pop performances of Juan Gabriel and True-Dee, constructing centers of belonging involves an act of listening as survival by coming out from the shadows, from the margins, from underground. Adhering to a performance of audibility and visibility in working together to transform normative spaces of citizenship, *Caramba* suggests, what Martínez calls "Compalandia" is always already a potentially queer(ed) space. To offer True-Dee as a home-maker and aguantadora in Lava Landing assumes a critical importance in discerning the forms of belonging available to the seasonal Mexican migrants around whom the narrative is structured, particularly since, according to Lulabell's mapping of Mexican masculinity, she inscribes an ambiguity between the "unconquered" territories and the states producing men "most likely to be homosexual" (108). True-Dee's queering of spaces of belonging like El Aguantador invites an exchange of silence for voice to those migrants who may be emerging from multiple shadows.

This shared experience of home requires attending to the multiple forms that constitute the characters' listening practices throughout the novel as forms of Greater Mexican community building. Attending to these surpluses in the novel's structure as a "tale told in turns of the card," that is, according to the whims of the divine hand of fate, Martínez chronicles a moment in the history of Greater Mexico that offers a utopian—or,

more appropriately, Heavenly—restaging of Cherríe Moraga's bingo-game history-telling in *The Hungry Woman: A Mexican Medea* (2001). In Moraga's play, the matriarchal figure Mama Sal tells the young Chac-Mool the "history" of the formation of the dystopic nation of Aztlán. Interspersed with bingo calls, Mama-Sal tells of the degradation of las Américas by multinational corporations, particularly the pollution of Mexican border communities. She then introduces Chac's mother, Medea, the titular hungry woman:

> MAMA-SAL: Tu mamá y su cadre were one among many small groups organizing revolts in pueblitos throughout the Southwest. Then Los Independistas declared Vieques Island free and sovereign—
>
> SAVANNAH: Which inspired an international response, already spearheaded by the Mayas in Chiapas.
>
> CHAC-MOOL: The Zapatistas
>
> NURSE: O-69
>
> MAMA-SAL: [. . .] Pan-indigenismo tore América apart and Aztlán was born from the pedacitos.
>
> SAVANNAH: Uniting the disenfranchised diaspora of Indian-mestizos throughout the Southwest.
>
> MAMA-SAL: We were contentos for awhile—
>
> SAVANNAH: Sort of. Until the revolutionaries told the women, put down your guns and pick up your babies.
>
> . . .
>
> NURSE: I-18
>
> MAMA SAL: Just like the Gringo and the Gachupín before them.
>
> SAVANNAH: And then en masse, all the colored countries—
>
> MAMA SAL: Threw out their jotería. (23-24)

This dystopic history-telling draws on the structural elements of bingo—chance, competition, quickness, attention—to illustrate the arbitrariness of the terms of exclusion and inclusion on which nations are built. It emerges as a dystopia because the ideal, the utopia, for Moraga is a Chicana/o nationalism "that decolonizes the brown and female body as it decolonizes the brown and female earth. It is a new nationalism in which la Chicana Indígena stands at the center, and heterosexism and homophobia are no longer the cultural order of the day" (*Last Generation* 150).

In structuring the novel as a "tale told in turns of the card," Martínez's restaging of that bingo game not only further Mexicanizes it as lotería, but also reinstates Moraga's ideal as she offers anti-patriarchal, queer, and migrant practices of community-building as the privileged expressions of cultural citizenship in the novel. She thus offers both queer homing and migration and return not as threats to but promises for the future of Chicana/o and Greater Mexican imagined communities. She revalues the places of the immigrant, feminist, and queer communities as they revalue themselves in the sonic spaces of the baile, where "you are whatever you wannabe." Moreover, the multi-modality of the narrative suggests that the space from which Martínez offers a revaluation is precisely the space of a queer chicanidad. Martínez's model of (trans-) nationalism is living, and, to echo Betonie, living things "shift and grow" (116). And listen.

Conclusion: Literary Listening and/as Performance Pedagogy

The research inquiry that has flowered into this dissertation began when, in my second semester of graduate school, I was reading Joanna O'Connell's essay on Pre-Columbian Literatures in the volume *Mexican Literature: A History* (1994), where I stumbled across the following quote: "[T]he problem of reading [the Mesoamerican codices] is already more than that of interpreting the signs themselves, for without knowledge of the necessary complement of oral commentary and the shared cultural discourses of a society, the interpretation of these texts remains tentative and approximate" (19). O'Connell's framing of the codices as a hermeneutic challenge motivated me to examine the ways in which contemporary Chicana/o and Native literatures posed similar challenges by incorporating popular music as oral/aural accompaniment that represented, in part, the "shared cultural discourses" of Chicana/o and American Indian peoples of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Having, in the same semester, completed a course in "Class and Gender in Contemporary Mexican American Fiction," which included Martinez's *Caramba*, I began to wonder how my interpretation of that story would change if I approached it like a codex by listening to the songs she includes on the "Guide to the Rockola." With approval and encouragement from my advisor, I sought other books in Mexican American literature that fit a similar bill; *Woman Hollering Creek* made its voice immediately prominent, and it was my great fortune that *Reservation Blues* and *Ceremony* (in that order) called to me more loudly than other Chicana/o texts. Each in its own way reminded me of the codices' hermeneutic challenge to recognize in a text the confluence of the multiple modes of composition—alphabetic, visual, and aural—which have, in modern academics, become separated into disparate fields of study.

Moreover, because the codices themselves served as a written basis for both formal and informal education, the codex analogy emphasized for me the functions of literature exhorted in Sir Philip Sydney's "Defense of Poesy": to teach and to delight. Beyond interpreting (and delighting in) the musical accompaniment of each work, I began to recognize that the literature of listening also poses a pedagogical challenge. Thus, the more I read the depictions of listening, the more I understood not only that listening is learned, but also and more importantly that fiction can and, as evidenced here, does teach varieties of listening. Each of the works considered in "Sonic Gentitud" teaches readers a resistant and transformative mode of listening. Each exposes readers to conditions of twentieth-century coloniality and offers literary performances of listening that embody a decolonial imaginary.

My understanding of the decolonial pedagogical functions of the literature of listening has effected a transformation in my own teaching, particularly my teaching of composition. I put these lessons into practice in the spring semester of 2011 when I taught the lower-division course "Introduction to Mexican American Literature and Culture" for the second time. My first time teaching the course, in the fall of 2009, I adhered to the English department's vision of the curriculum for all such sophomore-level literature courses, which are vast and varied. The curriculum emphasized research and understandings of contemporary literary criticism, students' use and engagement with the *Oxford English Dictionary* as a language-learning and –appreciation tool, and a pedagogical distinction between formal, historical, and cultural modes of reading. This curriculum, highly effective in many ways and certainly well-defined for the scope of courses under its guidelines, nevertheless failed to meet the more intangible needs of my

Mexican and Tejana/o students in the first iteration of my survey of Mexican American literature and culture.[99]

Particularly when it came to writing, some of these students reflected a mindset that they were not subjects but rather, like the texts we were studying, objects in the classroom. Despite all the reading and cultural work we had done over the course of the semester, they still did not see themselves as writers and speakers in their own right. Instead, even in a class on Chicana/o literature, these students appeared to continue to view themselves as Damián Baca suggests that histories of rhetoric and writing view them: as problems. According to Baca, the story that predominates in the history of writing is one that begins in Phoenicia, records the increase in literacy in ancient Greece, which then spread to Rome and on to Europe with the Roman Empire, and finally charts a further imperial course to the Americas. This east-west trajectory clearly ignores the pre-colonial presence of the codices, but it also and more egregiously positions contemporary Mexican and Amerindigenous students as, according to Baca, "unnamed linguistic 'problems' in remedial or standard first-year writing seminars. After a few months when the semesters end, Mestiz@s [as well as Indigenous and Latina/o students] curiously disappear from English Composition scholarship and its civilized world of the art of letters" (xv). The absence of naming, the erasure from the history, and that "curious" disappearance at the end of a semester reveal the stakes of giving Indigenous and mestiza/o Peoples in the Americas a hearing *and* a reading.

Thus, in the second iteration of my Chicana/o literature and culture course, I transformed my approach to teaching reading and writing to privilege the codices as

[99] This is not to say that I did not have students who performed magnificently; I did. And, in fact, by the end of the semester, at least one student initiated the refrain with which I have now become frighteningly familiar: "Before I took your class, I never knew my people wrote literature." I continue to hear variations of this refrain again and again at the college level, sometimes, unfortunately, from seniors who then wish they can start their college careers over as Mexican American Studies majors.

forms of Indigenous American writing as well as models for a pedagogy of listening. Beginning with the codices, I emphasized that, as Celia Herrera Rodriguez said recently at UT's Benson Latin American Collection gallery opening for the *Xicana Codex of Changing Consciousness* exhibit, "we [Chicana/os and Amerindigenous peoples] are a people of the book." For centuries, our books, interweaving audio, image, and text in ways that digital rhetoricians today would call "multimodal," have conveyed the importance of interpersonal communication through the very interplay between visual representations of listening citizens and oral/aural commentary or accompaniment. Equipped with this multimodal philosophy of a particularly Américan literacy as well as a pedagogical philosophy that, like that in the codices, values communication and community, I approached the spring semester of 2011. Though confident in the pedagogical models I was using for this survey course, I nevertheless could not have anticipated the students' amazing response.

In the opening days of the semester, I introduced students not only to the kinds of composition found in the codices, but also to the kinds of pedagogical practice. In images that depicted elders offering instructions to youth about mundane activities such as fishing or making tortillas, we examined how the *Huehuetlahtolli*, or "discourses of the elders," were conveyed as teachings that reflected in still images quite dynamic portraits of the forms of acceptable and ethical behavior.

The codices, I demonstrated, emphasize interpersonal communication, dialogue, and listening through the presence in codex images of las volutas, spirals that emerge from the mouths of speakers and grow in size like a snail's shell. Las volutas indicate speech and, by implication, a particular mode or act of listening. For instance, listening to the mundane speech of the elders, represented by a plain, unadorned voluta, involved a

different physical and cognitive response than did listening to *in xochitl, in cuicatl*, the floricanto or poetry and poetics indicated by more highly decorated—or florid—volutas.

After this introduction, the course then turned to the question and operation of student listening. The students began by narrating their own experiences in the form of cultural readership journals in which they documented their listening, viewing, and reading practices as a basis for discussion and for writing. The listening journal, not surprisingly, proved the most interesting. The predominantly Mexican and Mexican American students, in complete defiance of Jacques Derrida or Paul Miller, aka DJ Spooky, were making statements such as, "I usually only listen for things that relate to me"; or, in a single sentence proving what it was taking me weeks to demonstrate, namely, that listening is always a social activity; or, reflecting over the process to substantiate Jean Luc Nancy's philosophical claim that listening is always already a critical response to complex sonic production.

The course, however, was a literature course, and the aim of the cultural readership journals was to motivate the students to think critically about their previous experiences with cultural interpretation broadly in preparation for how we would read Chicana/o texts. In fact, after the listening journal exercise, the students were so well-equipped with a vocabulary for listening from both their own experiences and from their recognition in the codices of different modes of listening, that they became more attentive to how they listen in different situations. This particular tool became exceedingly important as we began to discuss poetic scansion, which I teach through Américo Paredes's "The Mexico-Texan." The poem has a very regular rhythm that relies on an incomplete dactylic quatrameter, which, through the absence of a final complete dactyl or metric foot, emphasizes even on a formal level the Mexico-Texan's loss of land, political power, and, ultimately, personhood that the poem seeks to convey. While the students

certainly appreciated this reading of the poem, they also became so involved in its aural performative aspects that one student suggested that the meter might actually shift if a native Spanish-speaker performed it. What followed this comment was a raucous affair in which the students began stomping their feet, pounding on the desks with their fists, and *listening* to determine whether their collective accents suggested a dactylic quatrameter or some variation on iambic pentameter.

Through this collective and embodied act, they performed the knowledge of a Eurowestern vocabulary that they had gained with respect to a Tejano poem. More importantly, they Mexicanized it, or, one could argue, they Indigenized scansion, returning their own understanding of poetics to a particularly New World context. Ultimately, we were unable to arrive at a consensus about the meter, but the students argued that even that inability to accord with a single meter, based on aural considerations like accents and first language, revealed the binational character of the poem. The Mexico-Texan remains, in the performance and meter of the poem, a figure caught between Mexico and the United States.

Through their performance of learning, their embodiment of an abstract concept like metric feet, the students made this knowledge theirs in a way that I could never have foreseen. As opposed to the students from my first semester of teaching (when, I should note, I taught the exact same material), the students from this class recognized themselves as participants in a process of subject-formation through education practices that they understood as both native and Native to them because of their exposure to those practices in the codices.

Another moment of participant-education revealed a similar process through which the students understood themselves as subjects learning rather than objects of learning. Near the end of the semester, having highlighted approaches to listening

through Chicana/o poetry, approaches to visual arts through Chicana/o muralism, and to storytelling through short fiction, novels, and plays, we turned our attention to contemporary Mexican and Chicana/o codices in the form of the *Codex Espangliensis: From Columbus to the Border Patrol* (2001). Expanding a full twenty-one feet, *Codex Espangliensis* is the work of border-crossing performance artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Mexican/Chicano visual artist Enrique Chagoya, and publisher Felicia Rice. The book's imposing physicality not only strives to emulate the form and folds of the pre-colonial codices; it also poses critical challenges to how we define "books," and, by extension, the history of books in the twenty-first century.

For most of my students, the codex was too long to expand fully in the small spaces of their dorm rooms or apartments. I was even hard-pressed to find space in my apartment to expand the text completely and, thereby, to fully appreciate its intracacies of design, which, in many cases spanned across pages. So in class we stretched it all the way out. Then, with very little prompting, students gathered at each end of the codex, which can be read from right to left or left to right, and got down on their knees, squatted, touched, and otherwise performed a kind of reading for which I certainly was not prepared, but which they embraced as normal, functional, and simultaneously collective and personal. Again, in this act of reading, the students transformed themselves from objects of learning into interactive subjects in whom knowledge was formed and through whom it was passed.

Indeed, their learning became a kind of performance in the sense that Diana Taylor describes in the *Archive and the Repertoire*, an embodied form of transmission of cultural knowledge. Or in the sense of Gómez-Peña and Roberto Sifuentes's "radical performance pedagogy," in which embodiment of multiple, frequently contradictory, identities flies in the face of the expectations of the empowered elite and transforms the

classroom to "a temporary space of utopian possibilities, highly politicized, anti-authoritarian, interdisciplinary, (preferably) multi-racial, poly-gendered and cross-generational and ultimately safe for participants to really experiment" (3). In this sense, these young brown students performed a radical form of understanding and pedagogy that reactivates the interpersonal, multimodal, and embodied pedagogical philosophies represented in the codices themselves.

More so, by embodying learning in these ways, they understood themselves as participants in academic and literary conversations that were no longer objects to be held and examined at a distance. Rather, they themselves constructed the conversations, listened and read the words of their elders, and responded according to their own understanding.

Yes, they learned about comma splices, sentence fragments, and subject-verb agreement, but these were no longer "problem" students faced with the insurmountable task of understanding poetry or proper English grammar. They now recognized English composition as a challenge to be overcome and decolonized rather than as a(nother) assimilationist strategy attempting to objectify and thereby dehumanize them. These were now active subjects, taking control of their own learning environments by inserting themselves bodily into them. Like Tayo, Ixchel, Big Mom, or Lucha, these students learned listening and reading as forms of resistance and transformation, and they emerged from the class transformed by their newfound understanding of their place in a long and dynamic history of writing in the Americas.

It is toward that understanding that my own research and pedagogy now turns. As I reflect on the insights into decolonial listening that *Ceremony*, *Woman Hollering Creek*, *Reservation Blues*, and *Caramba* have taught me, I seek now to explore the role that

listening plays in my own pedagogical practice and in the “shared cultural discourses” of my community.

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